

SOME
LITTLE
QUAKERS
IN THEIR
NURSERY.

by
M. CARTA
STURGE, R.A.



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By
M. CARTA STURGE, M.A.

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M. CARTA STURGE.
Aged about 4 years.

FOREWORD

A well-known proverb tells us that "the child is father to the man." Although this is not invariably true, the later history of the little girl of whose childhood the following pages give a graphic account, certainly supports it.

All her life the interests of my sister Carta lay in the direction of imaginative thought. She was an unusual child, and she grew up to be a remarkable woman. Her mental powers were, however, slow to develop. In after life she compared her childish mind to a bud so tightly closed as to be almost impervious to outward impressions. Ordinary teachers could do little to help her, and the latent intellectual gifts, which bye-and-bye were to carry her far, were not discovered by those around her until she was nearly grown up. Then they expanded so rapidly that when the opportunity arose for her to study Philosophy at Cambridge, her whole being brilliantly responded to University influences and culture.

For many years my sister was a most stimulating lecturer on the philosophical subjects in which she delighted. She possessed a remarkable gift of exposition, and her addresses appealed to large numbers of thoughtful persons of various ages, religious views and degrees of education, who all alike found them intellectually inspiring and spiritually helpful. She had a genius for friendship and was able to help many troubled souls who came to her for counsel. Some of them sought anchorage amid the storms of doubt; while others needed support and guidance in facing more practical problems. Whatever the difficulty, all felt the uplifting power of her sympathetic insight, enriched as it was by her experience of life.

At length failure of health obliged my sister to withdraw from active work. She passed away on the 2nd of February, 1929, aged nearly seventy-seven.

ELIZABETH STURGE.

Bristol, 1929

TO

F.I.C.

FROM WHOM I LEARNT SOME OF THE BEAUTIFUL THINGS

WHICH, TOO CARELESSLY, I FAILED TO LEARN

AS A LITTLE QUAKER

KEY TO NAMES

The Little Quakers = Children of William and Charlotte (Allen) Sturge, of Bristol.

Dorothy = Emily. b. 1847. Killed by a fall from her horse, 1892. Member of the Bristol School Board,

Alice = Margaret. b. 1848, m. 1877 Francis Goodbody. Both died 1921. Seven children.

Priscilla = Elizabeth. b. 1849. Writer of "Reminiscences of my Life."

Willy = William Allen, M.V.O., M.D., F.R.C.P. b. 1850, d. 1819

The Writer = Mary Charlotte (Carta), M.A. b. 1852, d. 1929

Henry = John Player. b. 1853, d. 1880.

Charlie = Charles Allen. b. 1855, d. 1862.

Rachel = Caroline, M.D. b. 1861, d. 1922.

Uncle David = Joseph Davis, a grand uncle by marriage.

Uncle Richard = George Sturge, an uncle by marriage.

Mary P- = Mary Player. d. about 1878 at a great age. Her father, John Player, was born in 1725 and was the founder of the firm of J. P. Sturge and Sons, Land Agents and Surveyors, still existing in the seventh generation.

Some Little Quakers In Their Nursery

CHAPTER I

WE were little Quaker children, strange fact though it appeared as soon as we were able to realize it. Strange, and perhaps not as welcome a fact as we have since, I am glad to say, learnt to think it. For we were then little able to appreciate the altitude of moral standard, or the heights and depths of the spiritual life which marked the community in which we found ourselves; and little did we think that the time would come when our having been born Quakers would be held by some of us to be one of the most precious facts in our existence. The youthful mind, however, could not then readily find itself in sympathetic touch with the harmonious peace and quietude which characterized the Society of Friends, and we were much more likely to find ourselves crudely and childishly wondering how it could possibly have come about that, Quakers being so few in number, we should have chanced to be born into this very tiny sect? And such crowds and crowds of Churchpeople as there were!—all those many little Church children with whom we had no acquaintance, but upon whose doings we looked with such never-failing interest. However, so it was, and Quakers we were. We were soon keenly alive to the fact that we were different from other people, even though we only saw those other people from a distance—on the other side of a paling, as it were.

It was a very little world, this Quaker world, with, in those days, a strong line of demarcation between it and the rest of the world; and all outside of it was spoken of as ‘out of the Society.’ ‘They do such and such a thing out of the Society,’ I often heard my mother say.

‘Out of the Society’! What could it be like out there? They seemed to do everything differently from us. What was it really like? Very wicked we were, quite sure, in spite of all those nice little Church children we observed with so much interest. They had wars and things out there, they fought and killed people, whilst we went to prison rather than fight—not ourselves, of course; but did we not look with unspeakable awe at our great-uncle David because—we whispered it with bated breath—he had been put in prison for refusing to fight in the Napoleonic wars? Put in prison, where all the naughty people went! And we pictured our aged uncle as a convict, until told he had been treated as a gentleman, allowed to wear his own clothes—his own proper Quaker clothes—and to have his own sitting-room, after which we thought perhaps it was all right.

Uncle David was one of those very stately Quakers. The idea of having been in prison did not at all harmonize with our notions about him, in spite of that saving clause about the sitting-room and the clothes. He was tall and dignified, very stern to all appearance, and rarely spoke—at least, to us—altogether an awesome personage, added to which was the fact that he was of kingly descent, which put a halo round him in our minds. He was, moreover, a man of great ‘weight’ in the ‘Society,’ so that even our parents always treated him with deference. He was not a person to be taken liberties with. Judge, then, how aghast we were when the small Henry took it into his head one day, when Uncle David was seated in dignity in our drawing-room,

suddenly to plop a hassock down upon his knees. This was a circumstance never to be forgotten, it was so terrible.

There were, however, compensations in regard to this awe-inspiring uncle. He had a garden which we regarded as Paradise. To be allowed to go and play there was one of the few intervals of entire bliss we ever experienced, always provided that we did not run the risk of meeting our uncle in any of the walks, or his fierce dog, which we believed would eat us up. Of the two we preferred the dog, for he was mostly chained, and there was delicious excitement in going as near as we dared, and then scampering in terror away; but we never dreamt of voluntarily going within range of our uncle. As a matter of fact, he was the gentlest of men, if we could only have seen through the stern Puritan exterior, and he would have been distressed if he had known that he inspired such fear.

His beautiful row of elm-trees overshadowed the road we so often traversed in our walks, and they cast so deep a shadow that Henry and I called that part of the road 'night.' But all that is long ago. Those golden chestnut-trees, those sunny lawns, those flowery borders, have long since disappeared, and a row of little shops stands now where 'night' used to be.

We ourselves lived in a tall red-brick house in an old-fashioned street. Large round bay windows ran up the whole height of the house. We were at the top of a steep hill, and overlooked the whole of an ancient city, full of church spires and steeples of every description. It was one of the finest city views I have ever seen, lying spread before you in a basin, a mass of gabled red roofs, fading into a far distance, with green hills beyond. At night the smelting furnaces blazed with a lurid glow near to the horizon, and we thought it might look like the Judgment Day. If the glow was a little deeper than usual we were almost frightened. From our nursery window, too, we could watch every fire that took place in the city. These were by no means infrequent, and almost constituted a daily item of interest in our uneventful lives. We were, in fact, so used to them that we rarely went to bed without first looking out to see if the glow was only from the furnaces; and on one occasion when a sugar factory was burnt down with terrific blaze under our eyes, and the grown-up people made a great fuss, as if they had never seen such a thing before, we were filled with astonishment. Why, it was only a little worse than what we had often seen before!

Behind the house was a small garden, where pink and purple larkspurs flourished. We used to pull the middles out, and fit one spur into another, so as to make larkspur rings, which we pressed in our hated lesson-books. To this day the sight of lark-spurs brings back to me a feeling of the irresponsibility of life, when there was hope that anything might happen, and you had not discovered the limitations of things. The garden was surrounded by a high and narrow wall, on the other side of one part of which was a drop of thirty feet into a stone-paved mews below. We used to jump and prance along this wall one after the other as fast as we could go, taking flying leaps where there were sudden differences of level, at the imminent risk of our lives; but as for that stone-paved mews, it was as though it were not, so much did we scorn the idea that we could possibly fall into it. It is needless to remark that our elders were not present when we did our breakneck leaps. But once we did get into a scrape, for we lighted a bonfire on the top of the stable leads; and

there was a great affair putting that out—why we couldn't imagine, for surely we knew how to manage our own affairs, and were no more likely to burn the stable down than we were to fall off that wall. But grown-up people had such a way of making a fuss about things, you never could tell what they would think of a thing, they seemed to think so many things dangerous, and on the whole it was much better to keep out of their way.

Still more attractive than scampering along the wall was careering up and down the narrow ledges of wood between the glass panes on the sloping roof of the greenhouse, where a false step would have sent us through with a smash and ghastly cuts; or walking on the ledge three inches wide round one of the bow windows. This was a joyful accomplishment.

On the other side of the house, across the street, we had another garden. Here we were much more in evidence, so could not do quite such enchanting things. But there were chestnut-trees, which the boys used to climb. How I ached to climb those trees! But it was, of course, forbidden as unseemly for a little girl, and a little Quaker girl. To this day I sigh at the thought of it, and feel I have missed an important pleasure in life. I was, however, allowed to get on to the lowest branch, which was called the 'kitchen.' The branches above were the 'dining-room,' 'drawing-room,' and so on. There was one comfort in the matter, that when the boys were up in the 'attics' they were well out of harm's way, and we had a respite from their eternal teasing. *Do Quaker boys tease?* Yes, quite as badly as other boys.

There was a space underneath the trees which we dignified with the name of the 'saloon.' It was Alice who gave it that name. She was the frivolous one of the family, and pored over the Court circulars and descriptions of Royal ceremonies, and all our grand words came from her, and also such knowledge of the world as we had about bowing and curtseying and dancing, and all the nice things which Quakers never did.

We had a grandmamma living near.' She was very solemn, and we stood in great awe of her. She was dressed in the severest costume of our sect. Her words were measured and few, and her low voice sounded very far away, as if it was not exactly of this sphere. And it always suggested to my mind that some 'Friends' lived in so ethereal a sphere that the sound of their own voice brought something of a shock to them.

There was a silent stillness in my grandmother's house, and a peculiar but pleasant odour about it. You seemed, as you entered the house, to *smell* the silence ; it was indefinable, delicious, sad. It was to the nose what the silence was to the ear, what the dove-coloured hangings were to the eye—nay, it was a *drab* scent. Ah! the atmosphere of a Quaker household in those old days, before they had opened their doors to the world — so simple, so severe, so dignified, so entirely lacking in luxury, and yet so comfortable! The colour of the curtains and the coverings was generally drab, a colour that lends itself to greater beauty than might be supposed. My grandmother's drawing-room was of a pearly drab, almost a dove colour, and the materials were always of the best. How shadowy these old houses were! All seemed so unreal as you sat in shy silence, or watched dim figures in quaint costume flitting through the ball, or down the silent passages. The tick of the clock at my

grandmother's seemed to me weird and laden with portent, yet delightful in its measured solemnity.

Few pictures adorned the walls of a Quaker house in those days. Art savoured, as they thought, of the frivolous and meaningless. A portrait of Elizabeth Fry, of one of the Gurneys of Earlham, of one or two aged relatives of mine, or of other noted Friends, were, as a rule, the only adornments of the walls, to which might possibly be added an engraving of William Penn making a treaty with the Indians.

My grandmother's was an austere household, and even though you were dreamy enough to appreciate the drab scent, the harmonious tone of the sad-coloured furniture, and the portentous tick of the clock in the silence, which all worked in well with your inner cogitations, you could not feel it otherwise than embarrassing, if not irksome. One room there was, however, in the house which we loved. That was the old nursery half-way up the stairs, where no children played now but ourselves and our cousins. It was very old-fashioned and quaint, and was presided over by an ancient dame who sat and mended socks by the cheerful fire burning in the old grate. She had been nurse to our father and uncles and aunts forty years ago. She had a far-away voice like my grandmother's, and gave us a gentle, quiet welcome as she hospitably placed at our disposal the treasures of the room. These consisted of dolls and of a doll's house of a previous generation. The dolls were dressed in the manner of the beginning of the Nineteenth century, with a fineness of work and muslin, a daintiness such as with all our new methods we never see now. We should not have the industry to do such work. They were a delight to us, and these same old-world dolls are in existence still, with their garments grown yellow with age: Then there were queer little books illustrated by Bewick, and Anne and Jane Taylor's 'Original Poems,' not to speak of 'The Daisy' and other instructive verses, in all of which the naughty children came to dire grief, falling down wells, setting themselves on fire in the performance of little escapades which we every day accomplished in safety. So the moral lessons made no impression upon our minds. Nevertheless, we loved the books from the bottom of our hearts, and never tired of poring over them, especially as they were all illustrated with woodcuts in which the naughty little girls, or the good ones, as the case might be, were dressed in garments just like those of the dolls. It was all deliciously ancient together, the old room, the old nurse, the old dolls, the old books, the old china—and how we loved it!—to the old canary, who had sung in his cage apparently from time immemorial.

One of these delightful books had in it a passage which so shocked us that we never dare read it aloud. We always read the verse in which it occurred with bated breath, for it had, so we were assured, a *swear* in it. It was 'upon my word.' Now, swearing is to the Quaker mind utterly and entirely wrong, so wrong that he does not even swear in a court of justice, but 'takes his affirmation' instead. So to our little minds such an expression as 'upon my word' was appalling, and almost superstitiously taboo. It seemed to us as if the writer of the book was almost as naughty as the little children she described, from whose conduct she drew so many morals. That old nursery in the still, silent house that had been my father's home remains among the pleasantest of my childish recollections.

Outside the house was a garden, which made amends for all the gravity within, with all its sadness and drabness, its silence and duskiness. Without, in the garden,

was quite a different scene. Outside the windows magnolias blossomed, emitting a scent that was anything but ‘drab,’ crimson hawthorn blazed upon the lawn, lilacs, laburnums, and roses rioted in colour, regardless of the proprieties of Quaker tints, whilst the garden ran sloping away in sunny peace. Through the foliage were visible buttercuppy fields, which faded away into dim distance beyond.

We used to play in this garden almost every summer evening until it was time to go home to bed, and dare each other to wander alone under the dusky elm-trees, where our grandfather’s ghost had once been seen, lending a shuddering interest to the spot. During one summer there was a very large and brilliant comet to be seen, which seemed to stretch across the sky, and every evening old and young assembled in the garden to look at it. I was extremely little at the time, and could not remember when the comet had not been there, which caused me to wonder over the matter much, for I supposed it had always been there, just like the sun and moon, and always would be there, so why come and gaze at it in this manner, any more than at them? However, it was only one more of the mysterious doings of grown-up people, whose ways were not as our ways, and so no more to be thought about.

I have spoken of our grandmother’s house as filling us with awe and embarrassment as children, but at a later time, when we were old enough to appreciate the two delightful aunts that dwelt there, with their quiet but poignant humour, their intellectual tastes, and, above all, their sympathy and counsel, we learnt to regard this household with great affection, and many a grief has been taken there to be solaced, and many a happy hour has fled all too quickly in the society of these congenial aunts. We used, as young people, to gather together there at what we called ‘Mental Teas,’ when there was a mixture of ‘books and work and healthful play,’ which we thoroughly enjoyed. These were quite unique little occasions, and those old-fashioned teas, now non-existent, when the urn steamed on the table, the board was spread plentifully with hot cakes and jams, and we all sat round, as at a set meal, and felt settled in for the evening, had a charm that no modern afternoon teas can simulate. What a flavour that tea had, as we drank it out of choice old Worcester! I never seem to taste any like it now. And the butter was of a sort now scarcely made, so rich, so creamy, so altogether old-world.

And if the mere accompaniments remain so delightfully in one’s memory after all these years, what shall I say of the presiding geniuses, our aunts? I could quote many a piquant saying, many a brilliant sally, but one of them still graces our circle with her presence, and would demur to further mention of themselves.

CHAPTER II

WE were very lively children outwardly, and very full of fun and play, but most of us had a substratum of melancholy, our two centuries of Quaker blood having dyed us deeply in Puritan seriousness, which the general gravity of our surroundings, and the entire absence of amusement, except that which we created for ourselves, greatly tended to foster; and this underlying sadness I believe to have been very frequent in Quaker families.

I think I suffered from it more than the rest of us. I do not recollect the time when I did not fall into dejected moods, in which I wondered sadly what could be the object of life. ‘What,’ I used to ask myself, suddenly falling into a reverie in the nursery, ‘is the use of this endless round, getting up and eating one’s bread-and-butter and drinking milk-and-water —our severe daily diet— of struggling through one’s lessons, and playing and going for a walk, then eating again, and going to bed, to have to begin it all over again to-morrow?’ It all seemed to lead to nothing, and certainly was not happy. This thought pursued me, especially in our walks, if we happened to pass along certain roads full of small houses, where I pictured to myself the same weary round of objectless existence. To this day I scarcely dare to pass along those roads, in spite of a now much happier view of things, lest there should come over me that terrible ‘no-object-in-life’ feeling, as I used to call it. Children do not tell these thoughts, but on one occasion I was so overcome with the misery of it that I did, for once, try to express it. I was barely four years old, and scarcely higher than the nursery fireguard, on which I was leaning my head, looking into the fire in saddest cogitation. Two nursemaids were sitting sewing at the table, the other children were somehow absent. Here was my moment. ‘I am so unhappy!’ I broke out, intending to try to say why. ‘So unhappy!’ exclaimed the nursemaids. ‘Whatever did I mean? A little girl with a papa and mamma, and brothers and sisters, and everything she could want, *unhappy*? Why, they had never heard of such a thing!’ I felt repulsed indeed, and never ventured to explain myself again. But they were not to blame for their want of sympathy. What could they know of such thoughts? Their ancestors—for our servants were generally not members of our Society—had not sat and meditated in meeting through two hundred long years.

Another thing that troubled me was the sound of church bells. We overlooked, as I have said, a great city, which abounded in church towers and spires, and the sound of the bells of which reached us from every quarter. Splendid old peals they were, rich and deep, and such as have ever since made the thin tinkle of modern single church bells an abhorrence to us. But those splendid peals were then an abhorrence to me, because of the depths of melancholy they called out. Yet I was obliged to listen to them, and I would lean upon the sill of the open window, and feel the vibration in the air of the sound of all those bells. How those vibrations swept over you! How they caught you up into their relentless sweep, and surrounded you, swamped you, swallowed you! But in those vibrations it was not only the bells that I heard. Beating in rhythm with them was the sound of steps, many steps, a confusion of steps, the footsteps of all the generations that had passed, of all the human multitude that had lived and died, and passed over this weary, meaningless stage before us. Why had they done so? What was it all for? It was a torment to me, this

march past of the generations, as I have always called it. I never talked about it. The other children hated the bells too, but whether they, too, heard that mysterious, that almost silent beat of the footsteps upon the air, with its tale of the many generations that had lived their little life and died, it never occurred to me to inquire until this moment.

Another thing that occupied my silent cogitations when still a child of four was to try to realize nothingness. I used to get lost in labyrinthine difficulties by trying to think the world away. ‘What would it be like if there were nothing, nothing at all—*nothing?*’ I used to ask myself. And then I would go through a process of trying to think a blank, a void. Sometimes I thought I had almost arrived at it—at least, so far as not to have a picture of anything in my mind; but there was one thing I never could get rid of, and that was a most obtrusive piece of furniture in our nursery, a large linen-press, and somehow this was always most persistent in forcing itself upon my mind’s eye just when I thought I was arriving at blank. This press seemed somehow to be bound up in the nature of things, and always convinced me that the world was not to be thought away. I did not then take kindly to transcendental views of matter.



Lost in thought

One day, as we were sitting at our nursery breakfast-table, when I was between four and five years old—I can approximately date it by other circumstances—Dorothy, the eldest of us, aged ten or eleven, announced to us that she had found out that once there was a philosopher who said that everything in the world was only an idea, a thought in our minds—such was her childish rendering of the matter. I did not attempt to discuss it with her, but I well remember thinking about it, gazing up at the sky through the window, and munching my bread-and-butter. I had a passionate desire to go to India, so thought I would test the theory then and there by thinking myself in India, and finding whether I arrived there. ‘Now,’ I thought to myself, ‘if everything is only imagination, of course I can be in India this very moment; but I am not in India, and I cannot make myself be there, so it isn’t true.’ And with that I dismissed it from my mind, little thinking that I should some day take much more kindly to the Berkeleian theory.

Dorothy was very old, and very grand. She could read long poems through like a grown-up person—worse than lessons, I thought—and she could draw and paint, and knew about odd theories and things. She had also disgustingly good taste, to my

infant thinking, and liked low tones in colour, ‘and all that.’ One day she and I were looking at an engraving of two children, and I, having an un-Quakerly love of colour, for which I sighed in vain, said that I should paint the children’s frocks, one red and the other blue. But Dorothy was contemptuous of my Philistinism, and said she should paint them in dull grays and browns. I hated ‘good taste’ for a long time after that, for hadn’t we browns and grays and drabs *ad nauseam*?

Dorothy and Alice went to a Quaker boarding-school, and were held by us in great esteem. Henry and I called them Dorothy-Alice, not as yet having learnt the use of the conjunction ‘and’ We would say, ‘Dorothy-Alice coming home to-day.’ We were, however, well aware that Dorothy-Alice consisted of two very different personalities, for Dorothy was grave, and never played with us, whilst Alice not only played with us, but initiated us into all the frivolities we knew.

Those were the days of crinolines. Of course, we little girls all pined and sighed for them, but did not wear them. So Alice used to pin our bowling-hoops into her skirts, and we followed her example, and then walked backwards and forwards through a narrow opening of the door, craning our necks round to see the wonderful effect behind, on which we thought we looked like other people. Oh to look like other people ! When at last Alice was allowed to wear a crinoline she insisted on wearing two at once!

Alice contrived to pick up dancing, and gave us lessons in the same. What may not go on in a Quaker nursery ‘unbeknown’ to the ‘powers that be’? I was very stupid at learning the polka, but had long ago invented a dance of my own, which went in a figure according to the pattern on the carpet.

‘But I will show you how I dance,’ I said to Alice, capering away on the carpet patterns.

‘But that *is* the polka step,’ said Alice. ‘Now you only have to twiddle round and round.’

So I capered round and round, and the thing was accomplished.

Henry and I decided to give a ball. We had our playroom often to ourselves whilst the others were at school and the babies in the nursery. So there could be no real people at our ball except ourselves, but that was of no consequence. It took us two or three days to prepare for it, decorating the room, and so on; but at last in the dusk of a late winter’s afternoon we were ready to receive our guests by the light of our one tallow candle and the fire. Instantly crowds of imaginary people entered the room. Henry and I, who in the presence of real visitors were ready to cry with shyness, now became all graciousness and smiles. The room was, to our ears, soon full of the buzz and hum of many voices, and we chatted away to our invisible friends with such animation that we entirely forgot they were not really there. Presently we stood up to dance. Unfortunately, instead of dancing with each other, we stretched out our arms to grasp an unseen guest, and found—a blank! The illusion was gone. We sat down gloomily side by side upon a bench, and, without exchanging a word, realized in silent dejection that the world was indeed a world of dust and ashes.

We were not dressed after the severest manner of our sect, for our father in his youth had suffered such a martyrdom from it that he wisely determined that his own children should not experience the same misery. He told us that he dreaded to walk

in the streets, ‘ his juvenile Quaker garb having so peculiar an appearance that he was jeered at as he went.’ Complaining of this one day to his father, the only comfort given was that ‘it was our duty to suffer persecution for righteousness’ sake.’ This suffering was spared to us in its most severe form, but I can remember the little street-children calling out ‘Quack! quack !’ after us on our way to meeting. Though not in the actual costume, we were dressed with severe simplicity, and, as we thought,— for our dress was neither one thing nor the other,— extremely uglily, and our hearts were full of many longings in the matter. I was considered especially vain as to clothes. Once I had a gray frock with spots upon it, and, better still, it was trimmed with fringe! This overpowered me with delight. ‘Look,’ I said to Dorothy-Alice when they came home, ‘I have all this fringe upon my frock!’ I was overheard by some of the ‘grown-ups,’ who shook their heads, and remarked with grave censure upon my vanity. And another time on a Sunday—a ‘first-day,’ I should say—I had on a new frock, plain, untrimmed, and of a brownish hue; but it was new, and that was rare, for I nearly always had to wear the outgrown things of the others, with inward lament. On coming out of meeting, I turned round and asked my mother with an air if my frock was crumpled, which was followed by the same shaking of heads and remarks, on which I grew more prudent in what I said, but not, I fear, less concerned about my clothes. I abhorred some of them. I remember screaming and crying for a whole hour because I was made to put on a more than usually ugly pair of stockings when going out to tea, a very rare treat. ‘Look,’ I said, holding out my feet and howling with fresh despair, ‘did you ever see such hideous stockings? No other little girl is ever made to wear such things.’ It was waste of energy. Even Alice, generally sympathetic in such matters, failed to take my part, so out to tea in the offending stockings I had to go, with the added deformity of red eyes and swollen cheeks, and oh, what a sore heart! Another time, hating one of my frocks, I ran through the thickest brambles in the vain hope of tearing it; but our clothes were not only so ugly, but so detestably strong that nothing would destroy them. A hat, too, that met with my disapprobation I rolled along the length of a dusty garret, but with the result only that now I had to wear a dirty hat in addition to its being ugly. I sighed in vain for feathers and sashes, and consoled myself by scribbling little girls upon my slate dressed in all the most beautiful fashions. It is no wonder that I was regarded as the black sheep of the family, an almost incorrigible little girl. The others sighed and put up with things, but I always spluttered and howled and rebelled, and it was long before I learnt what pure waste, and worse, it was to do so. The other very naughty one was David, who never under any circumstances behaved with Quaker decorum. I smile as I remember the things that David used to do in his pinnafores—how, on one occasion, storming and raging at the breakfast-table about something that did not please his fancy, he was told to leave the room. He obeyed meekly, but contrived as he passed it quietly to turn on the tap of the urn, which, not being observed, did not make itself manifest until the place was swamped in a steaming flood.

Priscilla, who had never been known to do anything naughty, once told me, since we have been grown up, that she had never all her life ceased to be surprised at the doings of David and me. In defence of us both I must say that many of our doings were not so much naughty as against the traditions of the family, as when, for

instance, after generations during which neither times nor seasons nor ceremonies had been observed by the family, David regularly dressed up his mantelpiece as an altar in all the colours according with the Church seasons.

And, to do Priscilla a justice which she failed to do herself, in spite of being ‘surprised at our doings,’ she had the rare and delightful quality of being sympathetic about things foreign to her own nature, which resulted in her having the confidence of the most varied members of the family from that day to this. But to go back to David for a minute. He used also to make very quaint remarks, apparently *à propos* of nothing. ‘Supposin’ all our brushes was in heaven, we shouldn’t have no brushes,’ he once observed, probably after the usual unhappy endurance of the use of the brush by nurse-maids. Another time, his eyes looking far away and lost in profound contemplation, he suddenly remarked: ‘Supposin’ our noses was in our necks!’

During a solemn Quarterly Meeting dinner, when Friends from a distance were entertained during the intervals of their meetings, David provoked much amusement by asking in a loud voice: ‘Mamma, was that fish killed with a sword or a gun?’ The following day, some of the ‘baked meats’ being gracefully ‘resurrected’ under cover of creamy sauces, and some of the guests being still present, he asked in stentorian tones: ‘Mamma, is that the ‘old pudden?’ The ‘old pudden’ became a by-word in the family.

It was on the occasion of a Quarterly Meeting too, that a Friend appeared in a particularly odd Quaker’s bonnet, and the guests being assembled in the drawing-room, David suddenly appeared, calling out: ‘Mamma, there’s such an ugly bonnet lying on your bed !’

‘Hush, dear, hush!’ exclaimed his discomfited mother; ‘we don’t talk about bonnets now.’

‘But there *is*, mamma; a frightful fright of a bonnet. Come and see. Whose can it be?’

Happily, the Friend to whom it belonged was far beyond objecting to strictures upon her bonnet.

The mixture of old Friends and almost baby Friends at a meal often resulted in amusing episodes. It was at one of these Quarterly Meeting dinners that, during the silence which takes the place of ‘saying grace,’ an old Friend, having devoutly shut her eyes, the impressive stillness was broken by a youthful member of the family, who, gazing into the devout Friend’s face, said, with loud reproof, ‘Wake up, lady; you mussunt go to sleep now!’ The Friend continued to keep her eyes shut, and no faintest smile passed across her lips.

CHAPTER III



In Meeting

I HAVE mentioned meeting. Meeting makes a large and important part of the life of a Quaker child, for it is a most severe discipline in the power of endurance of a certain kind—the endurance of silence and of doing nothing during long spaces of time. The meeting-house was far down in the centre of the town, a part of the town, too, which had become a slum. We had to go down one of the steepest hills I have ever seen to reach it—so steep that part of it was cut into many steps, with very quaint effect. The mounting of this hill and these steps after meeting was a thing that took away even *our* breath, who made light of such things; and after the quarter of an hour spent in climbing this hill, the arrival at the straight bit at the top was a relief like light after darkness. This hill added much to our dislike of going to meeting. However, going down it was easy enough, and as we descended all the church bells in the city played an accompaniment to our walk, ringing those mysterious ‘out-of-the-Society’ people to church.

When we arrived we entered a very sombre building—dignified certainly, and spacious. It had once been a monastery, and still went by a name indicative of its past use, and underneath the sleeping Quakers in the adjoining graveyard slept in peace a layer of monks, a curious development of the irony of time. The building was now destitute of its ancient monastic adornments, although there were still some interesting relics of its past history. The meeting-place itself was a huge square room, with a very high *flat* ceiling, supported by pillars of enormous height—as high as the clustered pillars of the cathedral not so very far off, but so absolutely plain and unadorned as to have a very curious effect in columns on such a scale. The square windows were placed very high, so that nothing could be seen from them but the sky. The room was filled with rows upon rows of black oak forms, very aged, with drab cushions upon them. At the top of the room, facing the meeting, were three tiers of seats raised one above the other, in which, solemnly facing the rest of us, sat the Friends of weight and importance, men on one side and women on the other. In the highest row sat the ministers who were recognised as such, for there are no appointed preachers in the Society. They all pursue the ordinary avocations of life on week-days, and only those preach who feel ‘moved’ to do so by the Spirit. At least, that used to be the case. Anyone who felt ‘moved’ might preach, and if, after awhile, it was generally considered ‘acceptable’—I love their quaint phraseology—any individual gifted with the power was promoted to the gallery facing the meeting, and called an ‘acknowledged minister.’ It might chance, however—and often did in

country meetings—that no one said a word throughout the whole time, usually an hour and a half; but this was of very unusual occurrence in our meeting. We frequently had silences, however, lasting for three-quarters of an hour or so, and, indeed, the greater part of the time was spent in solemn, and, to a child, appalling silence.



There was something almost deliciously dismal about it to my mind. On entering, we were taken near the top, and put to sit in a row, our feet propped upon high hassocks; and there we sat and sat with out moving for interminable ages, as it seemed to us. At the beginning of meeting the end was too far off to be even imagined; it was not in practical politics — so we sighed and adjusted ourselves to the circumstances. Our seats were sideways, fortunately, which gave us a view over everyone, and no slightest incident—if anyone fainted or anything—was lost upon us. But the incidents were too rare. We were generally seated early, so that at first there was the interest of watching the Friends come in. What stately ladies in grave silks and satins—always the best materials—walked in silence up the aisle in their coalscuttle bonnets! I carefully noted them, and took their portraits afterwards from memory, and very recognisably, too. Equally impressive gentlemen, too, walked up the opposite aisle; and young girls in untrimmed straw bonnets, and small children like ourselves.

When at last all had taken their seats, a silence fell over the meeting—a silence it is impossible to describe. It was as still as a mountain-top, and all the more awe-inspiring because it was the silence of numbers—so many there, yet all silent. It was awful to have to cough or to sneeze. We would choke for a quarter of an hour before we dare cough. When we did, we were covered with confusion and blushes, and I used instantly to wish that thirty years had elapsed and placed themselves between that coughing and blushing and the present moment. Thirty years! Perhaps then one might face these things with composure, like the old Friends sitting in front of us.

Well, the silence went on, and it lasted long and long. I used to watch the reflections of the sun. It shone in through some cracks in the blinds in a very subdued manner, and fell in circles upon the dark oak panelling of the wall. The circles began at the very top of the room, and crept very gradually, very silently, down the length of it. When they reached the bottom I knew that meeting would soon be over, but it was a long watching before that.

From time to time someone rose slowly from his seat and the silence was broken by a sermon, or by one who ‘appeared in supplication,’ when we all stood up. I never could understand the preaching.

It was mostly delivered in a peculiar sing-song, each individual having his own especial manner of singsong tune, as we irreverently called it. It was our particular delight to mimic the various Friends and their manner of preaching when we got home. Sometimes, when the preaching was more emphatic than usual, I cried with fright, for I thought the preacher might be mad. Quiet crying it was, not like my rebellious screams at home; and this was rarely noticed by the grown-ups, it was so silent. But once Priscilla cried out loud in meeting because she had dropped her glove, and she had to be taken out—a terrible event to be long remembered.

I used to watch the contemplative faces of the Friends as they sat rapt with their eyes shut. How I used to wonder what they were thinking about! Could it be that they were saying their prayers *all* the time? Henry was of the opinion that grownup people did not say their prayers. They were so good that, of course, they did not need to.



Meditation

‘They are not always doing naughty things like us, and, anyhow, nobody ever scolds them; so why should they say their prayers?’ argued Henry.

I did not myself take quite so sanguine a view in regard to the ‘grown-ups,’ and said I was quite sure that they did say their prayers. But then I had once or twice been taken to church by the servants, where the grown-up people even went the length of saying their prayers out loud. Still, it was a mystery what the Friends could be praying about all that time, and they did not seem to be very tired, or longing to move like us, or to be inwardly full of sighs and groans. They even seemed to like it. How strange were the ways of ‘grown-ups’!

Priscilla, who was our great authority on religion, said that we ought to employ meeting profitably, and not do just nothing.



Going to Meeting

'But what are we to do?' we asked. 'We can't possibly say our prayers all the time.'

She said we must gather our thoughts on the way to meeting, and not talk about just anything; and she made a rule that certain most interesting advertisements about circuses, and such things, which were on a hoarding we passed on our way to meeting, and which were all we knew of these desirable dissipations, must not be looked at. We were to turn our heads the other way, and think about God. I cannot say that this rule was very long kept. Priscilla said, too, that we could spend our time in meeting in composing hymns, as I had said that I didn't know what to think about God for such a long time. So we fell to composing hymns, and she herself set the example by putting the story of Adam and Eve into rhyme. I was extremely impressed with the result, and was quite sure her poem was a second 'Paradise Lost.' Since she wrote the story of the Fall, I thought I could not do better than write the story of the Redemption, though modestly aware that my own productions were of inferior merit. However, I persevered with the story of Bethlehem. It began like this:

In a stable close and small
There were some oxen kept,
And in a manger in a stall
A little baby slept.
The mother sat by very near,
Watching the little fellow,
So the child need not fear
When the ox begins to bellow.

In another effort I concentrated the story of Creation and Redemption into one short stanza, which ran thus:

God our Father made the heavens,
God our Father made the earth;
He sent His angels down by sevens
To tell of our dear Saviour's birth.

After the production of a few more efforts of this kind I wearied of it, and fell once more to thinking mostly of nothing, as I should have described it. These long, more or less blank seasons of meditation were, whether for good or for evil, a splendid discipline in the power of abstraction—a lesson Quaker children learnt only too thoroughly. It meant that you could easily wrap yourself up in such a manner that you were impervious to sights and sounds, and nothing could attract your attention. I have often heard governesses complain of the great difficulty of teaching little Quakers, because you could not get their attention. They will sit quite still, apparently listening, but in reality are not hearing a single word. This was an art that I especially excelled in, as will be clear when presently I talk of our lessons.

But we have not finished with meeting yet. We were by no means always lost in abstraction. The dear aged Friends before us furnished much food for observation. They were very quaint—some of them more quaint than words can describe—in their rigid manners and costume. The type has long since died out. It was marvellous how different they looked, although in the same garb. Some looked dignified and stately, others very spruce and dapper, somehow the Quaker bonnet or cap taking to themselves lines that were positively sprightly.

The Quaker's cap was capable of endless little variations, which marked the character of the wearer. Some were of plain book-muslin with perfectly plain pipings, and very severe in shape. These were worn by austere people, of whom to be afraid. Some wore caps of clear net, the pipings covered over with delicate little white ribbons, and the cap had a cheerful look about its lines. A few very gay caps had even a suspicion of a tiny white ribbon bow or two. When that happened, you liked the wearer very much; she was sure to be an easy Friend to get on with.

There was equal variety in scarves or shawls, the material of which might be of fine wool, or China silk of a cream colour, or of white net, which floated in the air behind the wearer. In this case she was sure to be what we call an 'easy and agreeable acquaintance,' a phrase we once saw upon an epitaph.

But in meeting it was the bonnets which betrayed character, and these, although all coalscuttle with the elder Friends, had very differing shapes as well as colours. Some were black, some gray, drab, or brown, some of a pearly hue, some of satin, some of silk, some wide, some narrow, some long, some short, and so on. There was one old lady who was very angular and stiff, and she wore the smallest quantity of material that could possibly be put into a skirt. The whole costume was of a chocolate brown silk — the scanty dress, the shawl, and the petticoat. On wet days she came to meeting in pattens. She sat up in the long row of dignitaries, although not, as many women were, a preacher. A slight nervous affection made her head shake, so that David always called her 'Noddy Lady.'



'Noddy Lady'

There were two aged sisters, exactly alike, born in the eighties of the eighteenth century. They walked up our steep hill with the lightness of youth, but otherwise they seemed to us to have come out of the ages.



The Aged Sisters

We rarely talked, we children, with any of these Friends. I remember one of them once asked me how many brothers and sisters I had. I was too small to count, so I replied very shyly and gravely that I should think about twenty, on which, to my astonishment, sounds of laughter issued from the long tunnel of the coalscuttle bonnet. She turned to my mother and repeated my remark, on which my mother also laughed much. I was very much puzzled. What *could* there be to laugh at in that? But there really was no calculating upon grown-up people.

But we must go back to meeting for a little. At last it began to be time for it to break up. As there was no service, and there were no hymns, there was nothing to mark when it was over. In old days, when the ‘feeling of the meeting’ was very strong, everyone seems simultaneously to have relaxed from his or her meditations; and they began to be sociable, and shook hands. Consequently, the shaking hands of the man and woman who sat at the head of the meeting had long become the signal that meeting was over. This was on out part a much-longed-for signal, and sometimes it seemed as if the process took ten minutes, for it was very difficult for the one to catch the eye of the other, and often one of them was lost in such profound meditation that he or she was unconscious that it was time to end. This used to fill us with inward vexation, and we watched with the utmost eagerness to see the abstracted Friend issue from her thoughts; but by this time the other one had often become lost again in his meditations, so that now we had to wait until he was once more aware of the duty that devolved upon him.

Once over, however, we moved slowly from our seats, and when out in the yard everybody was very busy greeting everyone else. Friends came from long distances, and this was an opportunity for a little social converse. ‘And how are thee, Sarah Jenkins?’ ‘Nicely, thank thee, Thomas Brown; and how is thy dear wife?’ were questions heard on all sides. The titles Mr. and Mrs. And Miss were never used, but the Christian name in combination with the surname was the mode of address. In all this general greeting of Friends strangers were not left out, for Friends, noting an unusual face, would go up to its possessor and, genially shaking hands, say, ‘And what might thy name be?’ and follow the question with an invitation to dinner. But on one occasion a waggish young Friend, on having this question put, irreverently

replied: ‘Well, it might be Brown, but it isn’t.’ History does not record whether he got his invitation to dinner.

After what seemed to us a great hubbub and fuss, everyone trying to find and speak with some particular person, the Friends got into their carriages and drove off. The multitude of carriages, some of them pretty fine ones, was great, and we esteemed it a great treat when our grandmother or Uncle David or some other kind Friend invited us to drive home, and so save the long hill. But it was a solemn treat to be enjoyed gravely, for how could we dare speak? and scarcely could we venture to move for good behaviour.

In the afternoon, as if we had not had meeting enough, we played at it again; but it was a very different affair when we did the preaching ourselves, and could break up at our own discretion. Sometimes we moralized away to each other with all due gravity, but we were too apt to turn it into an opportunity for irreverent humour. On one occasion, Rachel, when she was so small that she could scarcely climb on to her chair from which to preach with due effect, having the greatest difficulty, when arrived, in keeping from falling, gravely gave out as her text, ‘Blessed is he that toppleth, for his nose shall not be broken.’ She had at least caught the idea of protection!

In the evening, as soon as we were old enough, we had to march down the steep hill again. The evening meeting was twice as sombre and as melancholy as the morning one. The house was most dimly lighted, and; the long silence amidst the deep shadows became appalling; and, indeed, as I look back upon it, I can hardly think of anything more weird, or of anything to which to liken it.

Joyful was the day when you had a cold and could not go; but I rarely could manage to be quite ill enough. We made the most of any ailment, but accounts of our health on Sundays had somewhat to be discounted, like those of an uncle who, as a child, always had a sore finger on Sundays, but his mother used to smile and say that she thought it was only a ‘first-day soreness.’

On one occasion my mother did let me off evening meeting on the ground that my chilblains, to which I was a martyr, might be troublesome. I knew quite well that their fit of irritation was well over for that day, but maintained a discreet silence and remained at home. However, this most unusual treat was entirely spoilt for me by the prickings of my conscience on having thus suppressed the truth, and I had an early lesson in the fact that ill-gotten pleasure is no pleasure—at least, not to a little Quaker child. We were, as a rule, like all Quaker children, almost scrupulous in the matter of telling the truth, and even a’ first-day soreness’ we dare not exaggerate much.

Gulielma was so scrupulous—Gulielma, shortened to Guli, was a favourite name with Friends, because borne by William Penn’s very charming first wife—Guli, as I was saying, was so conscientious about telling the truth, that, after telling us anything graphically, as that ‘there were ever so many, or crowds of such a thing,’ she always added *sotto voce*, ‘at least, there were several, or one or two.’ We called these ‘Guli’s at lasts.’ I also impressed someone with my effort to be accurate when I once reported that ‘Guli was very poorly and rather ill.’

CHAPTER IV

I THINK I have a longer memory than many people, for I seem to remember back as far as two, or so. I cannot actually date it, but I fully remember what it was like to be dressed when one seemed scarcely able to speak, and I can perfectly recall the passive, irresponsible feeling of being turned about this way and that to have strings tied and one's arms pulled through armholes, and of feeling so entirely in the nurse's hands that, if she forgot to pull your arms through, it was her affair, and you resigned yourself to circumstances over which you had absolutely no control. Also, I well recall making the baby, wordless noise of discontent which our nursemaids used to call 'pimping.' I remember making it on being abruptly awakened from a day-nap, and put to sit on the floor with a toy to recover one's temper.

In religious matters, too, I seem to myself to remember very far back, and wondering exceedingly what was meant in our religious teaching. Alice tried to explain what death was to me whilst we were looking at a portrait of one of the Gurneys of Earlham hanging on the wall.

'He is dead now,' said Alice.

'What is it to be dead?' I asked.

'Oh, it means,' she said, 'that he can't do anything now—not anything at all.'

'Can't he?' I said. 'Then who washes and dresses him now?'

And I gazed at the portrait in much wonder. Alice does not seem to me to have known very much more about it than I did. We understood better before long, when one of ourselves died.

I can remember, too, the unbroken interest with which a child always asks the same questions about things, and, in spite of knowing the answer perfectly well, always asks again as eagerly as ever. When staying with an aunt, I used Sunday after Sunday to put out a puzzle with the story of Joseph printed upon it. The interest of this was never failing, and always elicited the following questions and remarks, as I well recall :

'But Judah wasn't as naughty as the others, was he? because he did not want them to kill Joseph.'

'No; he was not quite so naughty,' my aunt would reply.

'But he was *rather* naughty, wasn't he? because he wanted them to put him into the pit.'

Then I would turn to the consideration of Reuben. 'And Reuben wasn't so naughty as the others, either, was he? because he was sorry when he found Joseph was gone from the pit. He meant to take him safely back to his father.'

And then I would look in deepest concern at the picture of Reuben gazing into the pit and wringing his hands. If *only* he had come back in time!

I do not remember this, but my aunt has told me that when she was trying to teach me about God, and was explaining to me that He could see me, although I could not see Him, I remarked, with the full determination to get to the bottom of the matter that I always had: 'Then, I suppose that when I look up to the sky to see Him, He hides His head under a cloud.'

I remember, too, once as I lay in bed on a light summer evening, gazing up into the sky and saying to myself, ‘God is up there,’ on which I felt I ought to make some act of homage, and so nodded my head at the sky. It was some time before I could understand in any sense what was meant by heaven. We used to sing on Sundays, as a Sunday song, twirling ourselves round and round in the nursery as we sang, ‘There is a happy land, far, far away.’ I used to wonder very much where this distant land could be, or how anybody could ‘stand doubting,’ or ‘delay’ who had the chance of going to such a delightful place. I should certainly go as fast as I could, if I only knew how to get there. And then, what were saints? They seemed to wear crowns. There were pictures of Kings in our little history book, so I pictured the saints all looking like William the Conqueror and King Stephen in particular. This happy land was full of crowned heads, and I began to be doubtful as to its being a very delightful place, as the Kings did not seem to have been very good.

As I grew a little older, and developed my ideas of heaven, it became a most unattractive place. I was told it was above the sky, so pictured it as a long gravel path running all round the sky just out of sight. By this time I had begun to grasp the idea of a soul, and that good ones went to heaven. They lay, I thought, in rows, each with a harp, but how they managed to play it I could not imagine, because the souls had no arms, for this reason the soul had, of course, come out of the body, and had the shape of the trunk; but it was not probable, I argued with myself, that it was able to run through anything so small as the legs or arms, or even the head; consequently, when disembodied, there was nothing but a trunk. It did not seem that it could be very nice to be only a soul, nor that heaven full of them could be very attractive . . . but in comparison with the other alternative it was certainly the least of two evils. Then I somehow came by an unfortunate notion that God was a huge and powerful machine, which represented Him as Power only to my mind, and certainly not as Love. It was years before I was delivered from the harmful effect of this idea, but it was no one’s fault. It was the product of my own silly little mind, as far as I know. But I hope religious infant teaching conveys religious ideas in a much more spiritual manner now.

Quakers, although, many of them, so deeply spiritual, did not give much definite teaching to their children, I think. It was a sacred subject not to be lightly approached. At any rate, our parents gave us very little. Our father used to have us into the drawing-room towards tea-time on Sunday afternoons, and read a chapter of the Bible with us, questioning us upon it afterwards, but without anything approaching to doctrinal teaching. And after that he repeated hymns to us. I never listened to the reading, but was always immediately lost in my usual mood, at such times, of abstraction.

On one occasion we were having the story of the Prodigal Son. I caught but one idea, and when the first question came to me, ‘And what did he do then?’ I answered, ‘He killed the fatted calf.’ ‘No,’ said my father, ‘not yet; we have not come to that;’ and the question went to the next. When the next question came round to me, I again answered:

‘He killed the fatted calf.’

‘No,’ again said my father, ‘not yet; you are in too much of a hurry.’

A third time came a question, and I made the same answer, on which all the other children laughed; but that I minded not at all. And when at last the question that should have that answer was to be put, my father kindly arranged that it should fall to me; and that time, as a friend of mine puts it, the fatted calf was rightly planted.

When it came to the hymns, I could follow scarcely a word; they were poetry, and poetry was so confused, I thought. We each chose in turn what hymn it should be. I always chose first "Tis the voice of the sluggard," for that was all quite clear and plain to the understanding. Henry, I think, generally chose 'Let dogs delight to bark and bite,' for the same reason. We were fond of barking and biting ourselves, but did not consider it necessary to apply the moral too closely. The next time it was my turn to choose I chose 'Brother, thou art gone before us,' although it was not very clear; but it conveyed the idea of one of those armless and headless souls having left the body, and gave something to think about. My next choice was 'Thou art gone to the grave,' and then I pictured our gloomy graveyard down in the town. The last I chose was 'The Assyrian came down like a wolf on the fold,' chosen for the brilliant idea of 'purple and gold'; but who the Assyrian was, or where he came down, or why, I could not imagine. Then, to our joy, tea was announced, and we went off to what we thought a far more cheerful subject.

Most of our religious ideas we picked up from nurses and governesses, and in very crude fashion. We were in a constant state of fear of hell, and our religion was wholly that of fear, not of love. But this, I am glad to say, was anything but characteristic of Quaker teaching. A wave of this sort had swept over the Society some years before we were born, but it had been far from their previous attitude of mind, which was of a beautiful spirituality, full of love, and especially of the doctrine of the 'inward light' which 'lighteth every man that cometh into the world.' However, we children fell under much more crude teaching, and hell was the great thing associated with religion.

Priscilla told me that very few people went to heaven, and that there was very little likelihood of my going there; in fact, she said I might take it for granted that I should go to hell, as practically certain. On this I became, as Quakers would say, 'very low,' and fell into deep dejection. I sought here and there for comfort—even read text-books, and such, to which I was not addicted—but found comfort nowhere. At last my dejection became noticeable to the grown-up people, and inquiry was made about it. I stammered out that Priscilla had told me that I was quite sure not to go to heaven, and poor Priscilla was very severely reprimanded, whilst my mother endeavoured, but without much success, to reassure me. An uncle of grave taciturnity took me upon his knee by way of expressing sympathy. I sat there gravely appreciative of his kindness, but sadly reflected that no kindness experienced here below could be of any use if what Priscilla said, who was my oracle, was true. Recovery was due at last to one's natural buoyancy of spirits, which refused to think of such far-off contingencies for long.

David took a far more cheerful view in regard to himself, for he was so sure that he would go to heaven that he used to pray that he might be allowed to go to hell just for one day to see what it was like. Poor little Rachel, who was the victim of his teasing, was so sure that he would go there that she thought it quite unnecessary that

he should pray about it. Besides, she had had a dream, in which the universe concentrated itself upon the toy-table in the nursery, on which stood heaven, built of their favourite bricks—covered with pictures of the Kings and Queens—whilst the insignificant bricks which had no pictures made a very innocent opposite place. In the dream both Rachel and David died, and the former went happily to the picture-bricks and the latter to the plain ones. After this dream Rachel felt no doubt whatever upon the matter, but David failed to see that the dream need be regarded as a true one. Speaking of those picture-bricks, the one on which was the portrait of Queen Mary had been so terribly beaten by us that her portrait was obliterated. Every time we took the bricks to play with we felt it our duty to continue the chastisement, which we did with great energy, using all the opprobrious language we could think of. Poor Queen! I have often thought how sad an irony of fate it was that one so tender to children as she seems to have been should have come down the ages as one to be execrated by little children. King John, too, was beaten for his treatment of Prince Arthur.

I have alluded to the subject of our prayers. These were to me full of difficulties.

Firstly, there were so many things to pray about. I had to pray diligently every night that every individually mentioned member of the family should go to heaven. Secondly, the prayers had to be extremely long and emphatic, in order that they should be heard. I used to pray, ‘Let So-and-so never, never, never, never, never, never . . . (some twenty or thirty more repetitions of never, never, never) . . . go to hell.’ This process had to be gone through for each separate person, as a faint chance that perhaps they might escape. Then I used to pray—for I seem to have had the community upon my mind—‘Let there never, never, never . . . (repeated again endless times) . . . be any more war.’ The same kind of thing had to be gone through that we might never have the house burnt down, or be buried alive, or have horrible diseases, and so on. Then, again, they must be said absolutely without a wandering thought, in order to be efficacious. For, of course, I had been taught that ‘words without thoughts never to heaven go,’ and was afraid that if my thoughts wandered for one instant my prayers would be in vain, and so I had to keep beginning them over again. I often began the Lord’s Prayer at least twenty times before I was satisfied with my manner of saying it. ‘Do you think she has fallen asleep?’ the nursemaids would ask each other, and presently I was hustled up and put to bed, where I dare not go to sleep until the long, weary task had been completed. It wore me out. Once only did I go to sleep in the middle, and then I awoke uneasily and burst out crying when I recollect that I must now finish my prayers. Nurse came and asked me what was the matter, tucking me up, and telling me to go to sleep again. Of course, I did not tell her my trouble, and conscientiously went on with my task and bondage. Long, long afterwards, Priscilla delivered me from this by telling me that I was just like a Pharisee.

‘Why?’ I asked, much shocked.

‘Because you think you will be heard for your much speaking. Why,’ she continued, ‘God does not need to be begged so hard.’

‘Doesn’t He?’ I exclaimed with joy; and I was delivered from my bondage and hard self-inflicted task.

She also gave me another lesson, perhaps not quite so good a one. One of our brothers died—the cleverest and much the most promising one of us. We were sitting at tea when the news was brought us. I slipped instantly down from my chair, and going to a distant corner, fell upon my knees. Priscilla soon came after me, and asked me sternly what I was doing.

‘Why,’ I answered, ‘*of course*, I’m praying that Charlie may go to heaven.’

‘You naughty little girl,’ said Priscilla, ‘you mustn’t pray for him now. Why, it’s like the Roman Catholics to pray for people after they are dead! It’s a most dreadful thing to do.’

Like the Roman Catholics! I was terribly shocked, and earnestly wished I had been a little more diligent in my prayers a little sooner. However, I was consoled, and told that Charlie had been such an extremely good little boy that we might feel quite sure it was well with him.

Charlie was seven when he died. Long before that—at five or six—he had been found comparing the accounts given in various histories of the same event; but he did not die, as might be supposed, of a brain disease, but of diphtheria.

CHAPTER V

FOR Henry and me there were other difficulties at one time connected with our prayers, and this came from the terrors we endured whilst going to bed. The nursemaids took to sitting at night downstairs, where they could gossip with the other servants, and Henry and I were left alone in the dark and weird upstairs regions, being supposed by now to be able to take care of ourselves. We experienced paralyzing fears. These upstair regions were ghostly, and full, as we thought, of black men and robbers. We used to creep down the stairs as far as we dared, so as to be able to look through the banisters down the deep well of the staircase into the hall below, to give ourselves the sense of being in contact with the grown-up people down there; and thus gazing down, we tremblingly said our prayers, flying in the middle hastily to our rooms if a door below opened and we seemed in danger of being discovered. When danger was over, we would stealthily come back again; and sometimes our flights were many, and finishing our prayers a slow process. It never occurred to us to pray for deliverance from our fears.

At one time, when Henry was away, I had to say mine alone. This was nothing short of agony, for then I reigned in these dusky regions alone, except for a sleeping baby or two away there in the night nursery. I said my prayers then in my room, for, when alone, the dark staircase was as terrifying as my room. In between each sentence, as I knelt at my bed, I turned my head round, white with fear, and wildly gazed around the large, dimly-lighted room with its one flickering dip candle to see what monster might have entered while my eyes were covered. Once I saw peering at me out of the darkness a pair of gleaming yellow eyes. I almost wonder I did not go off my head with scare; but no : after all, I was a Quaker child, trained in some measure, at least, to presence of mind, and I quietly returned the stare of the eyes, which had, as I looked, a familiar look, and I saw it was the black cat, whose body was entirely invisible in the dark. Cats were always my friends, and I composed myself. But the nightly terror I went through permanently injured my health, in spite of the fact that when I really did see something startling I pulled myself together and behaved reasonably.

The odd fears of children, so almost universal that one becomes half inclined to think that they cannot be mere vagaries—that well-known man that is going to catch your foot as you spring into bed; the unseen horror that lurks in that dark corner; the fear to stretch your feet in the bed lest there should somehow be a snake down there; the nightmare that your head may be cut off like all those people in your history book; the countless horrors, seen or unseen, that haunt a child's mind—are they, perhaps, a vague consciousness of real spiritual or moral dangers which in darkness, finding nothing to obstruct their power of impression, visualize themselves in these half-tangible images on an impressionable child's mind?

It seemed as if one could not help these fears; yet sometimes, in the very back of my little Quaker mind, I used to feel that with an effort I might perhaps have braced myself up so as not to stand paralyzed sometimes for half an hour at a time in the middle of the shadowy room with its flickering candle. But such self-control as this would have needed helping out by some wise and kindly older person, and, as I confided these fears to no one, such a person was not forthcoming.

We were somewhat neurotic children of the nineteenth century, whilst our elders not only belonged to a hardier generation, but practically to one prior to their own; for Quakers, living rather much isolated at that time in a circle of their own, retained much that was old-world in their manners and habits. ‘We learned later to love this old-world atmosphere, and to feel the echoes of past ages about us, but in our childhood we did not appreciate it, and David would say that we were Victorian children living in the reign of Queen Anne, so ‘what could we expect?’ We have often gently chaffed our father because he carried his old-fashioned tastes so far that, although a real lover of poetry, he never could be induced to read any poet so modern as Tennyson, or even Wordsworth; and so lately as twenty years ago, when, being in the Lake district, we wanted to take him to see Wordsworth’s cottage, he refused, saying that he did not care to see the dwelling of a ‘new-fangled poet like that !’

This old-fashioned habit extended to the many details in the household, and in consequence, when other people’s houses were ablaze with gas, our rooms were mostly lighted with a single tallow candle, and the staircase and passages were not lighted at all. In Queen Anne’s reign, when there were no facilities for lighting up, it was, of course, very extravagant to light mere passages and stairs, where nobody was sitting, and in our home it was considered a luxury, which in spite of all entreaties we were not allowed to have. Hence our chronic agonies from the fear of darkness. It was, however, some time before we realized that we were peculiar in our manner of lighting, and David’s bright imagination pictured the whole world of human beings thus lighted, and composed what he called a song about it when he was a very small boy. This was the song:

THE SONG OF THE TALLOW-CANDLE

How many men of might,
How many men of valour,
Go them to their beds at night
Lighted by a piece of taller?

And as at that time he was ‘unable to conceive of more than a few hundreds in the world, the song continued :

Six hundred men of might,
Six hundred men of valour,
Go them to their beds at night
Lighted by a piece of taller.

Apparently it took men of might and valour to be able to face the terrors of the dusky shadows thrown by a farthing dip.

‘Oh, I feel so frighty, so chickity!’ David would exclaim as we shudderingly passed along the pitch-dark passages, where we had to feel our way, with black men and monsters all about us, as we thought. Yet it was a luxury to have a light, which we must not even think of. What agony it was to be sent upstairs in the dark to fetch some forgotten thing! How we groped our way along, daring to look neither this way

nor that, and when we came down again tearing for our life, taking in terror the last six steps of each flight of stairs with flying leaps until we found safe refuge below!

David seems to have contemplated the universe, not only from the point of view of the terrors of going to bed by the light of a farthing dip, but also from that of its weaknesses and sufferings, and he made another song—'A Song of Vanity and Pain'—which ran in the following manner:

How many men are vain?
How many men are proud?
How many men are suffering pain
Which maketh them to roar aloud?

And this was pessimistically answered by the conclusion that everyone was proud or in pain:

Six hundred men are vain;
Six hundred men are proud;
Six hundred men are suffering pain

—and so on.

CHAPTER VI

IN spite of being externally full enough of fun, I was so much troubled underneath by my puzzles concerning the universe and life in general that I remember one single day—one only—that was a really happy day, when every trouble was thrown aside, and one just revelled in the mere joy of existence. It stands out as one isolated day of radiance and joy. This one day was one on which my father drove three of us a long distance into the country, starting early and returning late. It was a brilliant summer's day, and we drove out to see some quaint old Quakers who lived in far-off seclusion. We three played in their beautiful garden throughout the day, except when we went indoors to a hospitable meal of plain but substantial description. We were all in an ecstasy, and raved about in a rapture, almost devouring the flowers, hanging over one delicate rose as if we had never seen a rose before, and peeping carefully in at the unfledged birds in a nest in the creepers overhanging the summer-house. It was like the things you read about in books, I thought. I had a profound scepticism about things I read in books. I had never seen a shepherd with a crook; indeed, I had never seen a shepherd at all; I did not believe there were such things now. They used to be, no doubt, but had disappeared. Neither had I believed I should ever have such fortune as to see fledglings in their nest. I almost doubted whether they were not also the mere imaginings of poetry—of such charming poems as:

‘A little bird built a warm nest in a tree,
And laid some blue eggs in it, one, two, and three;
And then very pleased and delighted was she.’

But here they were, one, two, and three, and something better than eggs—actual little birds all with their beaks wide open. I loved birds so much that a picture of a lark given to me was pinned on the nursery wall, and I used to dance and sing before it, and call it by endearing names. This happy day, with real birds in it, came to an end at last, and the dear old Friends gave us a bunch of flowers to take home, putting with it the very rose we had so lost ourselves in rapture over. This attention to us, this consideration of our pleasure and feelings, we felt to be very touching.

I will not say that, although this was certainly the only quite happy day that I ever experienced in my childhood, there were no occasional hours of happiness here and there. I recall plainly my first sense of the adorability of Nature, when on one sunny spring morning I looked out of an open window upon the bright leaves of the chestnuts, and drew in the air with a sense of delight, wondering in complete bewilderment what it could be, that vague something that seemed like a message—a message that I could not understand, but something wonderful. What was it? Why should trees and sunshine for one moment make one feel the joy of just living? It was momentary, and I went back into my old sadness and melancholy cogitations about the objectlessness of life soon enough. Once, too, I felt the same on a bright summer's day, just for a few minutes, again wondering what was the vague and intangible charm which for a moment gave a sense of happiness, all about nothing,

as I thought. Had anyone introduced me to Wordsworthian thought, perhaps I should have understood.

When older, and still unable to understand it, the beauty of Nature was almost a distress to me. I longed to comprehend it, to feel it a part of myself, and myself a part of it—to lose myself in it, to be one with it; but, through not understanding, I felt it something foreign to me, some beautiful thing that I did not belong to, and it made my heart ache to a degree that made it painful instead of soothing. I had a most passionate longing for the Unity of things—the philosophic instinct for the One as underlying the Many—but knew nothing about it, nor could even then word to myself what it was I longed for so pitifully. Thus Nature remained foreign to me and a riddle for many a long day. Could it only have been explained that Nature and I were deeply akin in the Eternal Verity of things, what a difference it would have made!

My intense longing for the realization of the Unity of things also tortured me in regard to human beings. I longed so much for a sense of kinship, for the realization of something common to us all. I could not possibly have expressed it in words, even to myself, but it gave another source of heartache. I would pass little children in the street, and my heart would go out to them with a sense of such an excruciating need of some kind of relation with them that I resorted to a very crude method, in thought, for bridging the abyss that seemed to separate us—us and all those little children that belonged to such a different world ‘out of the Society.’ I comforted myself with the thought that we were all descended from Adam, and therefore really of kin. Here I found my longed-for Unity, as far as human nature was concerned, and the thought giving my spirit instant relief, the grief of my heart would be for the time assuaged. All my life long I have had this passion for Unity. I had not, however, the genius to discover it for myself, but was conscious of a vague unrest for want of it.

It was not until I was eighteen or nineteen that I met with its expression in another mind, which interpreted it for me, when, in a casual moment, I took up a volume of Emerson’s ‘Essays,’ and read the following passage: ‘There is one mind common to all individual men. Every man is an inlet to the same and to all of the same. . . . Who hath access to this universal mind is a party to all that is or can be done, for this is the only and sovereign agent.’ This sentence so intoxicated me that I could not touch Emerson again for months. Here was the clue I wanted, that which could cause ‘the seeming solid walls of use to open and flow.’ The barriers of isolation began to thaw.

Other occasional hours there were that lightened the gloom—the time spent in our grandmother’s nursery once now and then, the playtime in her garden with our cousins, or in Uncle David’s garden; and once a year a dear aunt took us a long drive and turned us loose into a cowslip field. Then at home there was the stolen delight of getting hold of a storybook—‘The Wide, Wide World,’ ‘Uncle Tom’s Cabin,’ or some purely childish book. Then did I steal away up into a cold attic, stand leaning on the window-sill, and read and read, oblivious of all until the light waned and I could hardly see. In such blissful moments as these I forgot even to be afraid of the oncoming darkness. When no longer able to see, I returned to schoolroom life frozen to the bone, but with a sense of having had a short-lived, stolen happiness.

It was necessary to retire to an attic for these scattered half-hours of pleasure in books, because the authorities who reigned in the schoolroom held the old-world opinion that all persons, young and old, of the feminine gender should be occupied every spare moment in the use of the needle. In the old days, to do anything else, unless it were cooking or work in the still-room, was counted idleness. This idea still held with us almost as strongly as in the days of some old ancestor of ours, who, if any young person pleaded that she was not sewing because there was nothing that happened to need sewing, would say: ‘Why, if I had nothing to sew, I would cut a hole in my apron and then mend it, rather than be idle.’

Consequently, we were esteemed culpably idle if we were ever caught reading a book, even though it should be a highly instructive one, out of school. Whenever we were found reading, we were chivied up, and told to ‘be doing something, not idling about like that.’ This we resented exceedingly in our silent minds. Outward protest was a thing not to be thought of, but I retired to holes and corners with my books, having a temperament to which reading was absolutely necessary as soon as I had learnt the art. When four or five years old, I would sit under the table to read my book, spelling it out to myself with very queer pronunciations. Priscilla once caught me thus on a Sunday reading some childish book, and sternly told me that I was very naughty to read a book that was not a Sunday book.

‘Oh, but it is a Sunday book,’ I pleaded, and pointed to the word ‘God’ in it, which I considered guaranteed its Sunday qualities.

‘You silly child!’ said Priscilla. ‘As though having the word “God” in it just once made it a Sunday book!’

As I was well aware that the book contained no instructions about how to be good, or to escape hell, but was about lions or tigers or something, I guiltily yielded the point, and loafed about idly, ready for any piece of mischief Satan might find for me to do; but what the special piece of mischief was on that occasion I do not know.

Our chief Sunday book was, of course, ‘The Pilgrim’s Progress.’ This we used to read aloud together, all huddled upon the top of a linen-press, where we were in chronic danger of tumbling over if anyone moved ill-advisedly; but this was, to our minds, all as it should be. To sit safely on the floor, or, still worse, on a chair, when you needn’t, was not to be tolerated for a moment. In school you had to, of course, but that was different. I loved ‘The Pilgrim’s Progress,’ not because I cared for Christian’s adventures so much, still less from being interested in his spiritual experiences, but because of its sonorous and dignified style. I wished they did not talk things like the Bible quite so much, but still listened with a kind of pleased contentment.

On other days we would often read Andersen’s Fairy Tales with rapt attention, this being a book which, unlike other little Quakers, I think, we were fortunately allowed; and at this stage we were young enough not to have to sew, so had nice reading times together occasionally. Then, when washed and brushed and dressed in order to appear downstairs after dinner, we were all in a great hurry to go down. And we used, the instant we were ready, to rush out on to the landing, where the bell which should summon us downstairs hung over our heads, and seating ourselves in a row, we would gaze steadily at the bell, and entreat it to ring in a monotonous chant, which consisted of ‘Please, bell, ring—please, bell, ring—please, bell, ring,’ and

when at last it did ring, we ran helter-skelter downstairs, leaping six stairs at a time, all trying to be first. I can hear now the sound of us as we bumped and thumped down that deep well. It is surprising that we none of us ever fell into the well, for we used to hang over it in perilous fashion, and throw water down it for the sake of the splash on the distant floor below. At last, indeed, this game came to an end, for on one occasion a stately aunt sailed across the hall at the bottom in her rustling silk while we were thus naughtily amusing ourselves, and—but I had better draw a veil over the consequences!

When arrived downstairs alter dinner, we mostly betook ourselves to putting out puzzles or drawing pictures. This last was my favourite pursuit from the moment I could hold a pencil. On one occasion, when very small, I copied a picture of children sitting in a room surrounding their mother, and with a cat in their midst. The cat was more than my drawing powers were equal to, so I left it out, and then showed my drawing to my mother.

‘But why haven’t thee drawn the cat?’ she asked.

‘Oh,’ I replied, unwilling to acknowledge my incapacity, but quite equal to the occasion, ‘the cat had gone out of the room while I was drawing!’

On summer evenings sometimes a very real pleasure fell to our lot in turns, instead of these evenings with puzzles and drawing, and that was when our father took us for a drive. These drives were short episodes of entire happiness to us—happiness which one could know and feel fully conscious of. To me, the mere getting into the country was such joy, even though the beauty of it when older so troubled me. To pass through lanes of which the banks were studded with blue speedwell or pink campion; to see hares and rabbits scampering in the fields; when we stopped for a while, to feel the silence, so full of something beautiful, though so undefined and illusive—these were moments when I forgot to wonder what was the use of living. The country sights and sounds might make one feel sad, but it was a sweet sadness, so different from one’s other sad moments, such as those when one felt the tragedy of life as one listened to the march past of the generations in that ever-recurring ringing of the bells. One grievous alloy there was to the bliss of these drives, and that was the knowledge they must come to an end. However, Henry and I, who sat in a seat behind, used to put off that horrid thought until, on our return, we came to a certain house which marked the fact that we were within twenty minutes of home. That house we called ‘Sorry House,’ and very sorry it was. We passed it with sighs, and from that moment yielded ourselves up to silence and the prospect of bed on reaching home.

Henry and I shared together in many things, from the time when, as tiny toddles, we said we would just for fun cut off our toes and then gum them on again—which we were quite sure we could do—to the time when, at eleven or twelve, we took it into our heads to become very strict Quakers, and used to pore over Barclay’s ‘Apology’ or old Quaker biographies and diaries. But after that we developed wholly different interests and temperaments, and the intimacy ceased, alas! However, we had no foreboding of this as yet, and invented endless games together, and always took our walks arm-in-arm, talking hard of ‘shoes and ships and sealing-wax, of cabbages and Kings,’ but I maintaining a strict reserve on all the

enigmas which puzzled me. I do not think Henry troubled himself about such things as thinking away the Universe, or seeking for the One in the Many.

We kept away from the nurses and babies as far as we could, letting them go on in front, and then we could amuse ourselves in various naughty escapades, such as runaway knocks and scraping our feet on other people's scrapers. There was great excitement in doing this, for, so vague was the line we knew how to draw between what was really wicked and what was not, that this occupation had to our minds all the excitement of committing a real crime, only we must not be caught at any price, for that, we thought, meant going to prison. But one day, just as I had carefully scraped my feet, on looking up, I beheld the owner of the house and the scraper gazing at me through the window! I ran after the nursemaids in a state of gruesome fear, but said nothing to them, only confiding the circumstance to Henry's sympathetic ear. I was sure that vengeance would overtake me sooner or later, and that that householder would watch for me until I was caught. That night I lay awake in anxious cogitation as to whether it would be possible for a little girl so to disguise herself as to elude the search of a policeman. But, no; I feared not. I did not even dress myself, and how was I to persuade the nursemaids to dress me in wholly different clothes? And even if they could be persuaded, how about my mother? No; the thing was impossible, and so there was nothing for it but to go to prison if recognised in the street by some watchful policeman set on to this cruelty by the owner of the scraper.

'Henry,' I asked at last, 'are you awake?'

'Yes,' said a sleepy voice from the other side of the room.

'Do you think they will send me to prison for scraping on their scraper?'

Henry goodly awoke himself to reflect. He wasn't sure; he thought I had better go and ask nurse.

For once she was sitting in the nursery, where she ought to be, and I arose and pattered in my bare feet along the dark passage and appeared in the dimly-lighted room, where she was busy sewing.

'What are you doing?' she asked crossly on seeing me shivering in the doorway.

'Do you think,' I stammered out, '... I want to know if... do you think they will send me to prison?'

'Send you to prison! Who? What for?'

'Oh, I scraped my feet on a scraper—not our scraper, you know—and the old woman that belonged to it saw me. Do you think she will send a policeman to take me to prison?'

'No; of course she won't. Go back to bed instantly, and don't let me hear such nonsense.'

So back I trundled, somewhat relieved, but not altogether, for nurses never did know the things I asked them; they could not tell me what was the object of life. Still, they might know about prisons and things. And then she had been so cross, and offered no word of consolation for my fears. But, then, it was not a world of consolations. So I got into bed and found refuge in sleep, and by the next morning had forgotten there was such a thing as a policeman in the world. This wholesome power of forgetfulness is the salvation of unhappy children.

The most conspicuous case of desolation I remember as a child was when for a short space of time I was lost. We were at the seaside and playing on the sands. I had found a pimpernel during the walk, and was so entirely wrapped up in the scarlet delight of it, and in planting it in the sand to keep it fresh, that I did not observe it had come on to rain, and that the nurses and children had beaten a speedy retreat. When I did find out, and looked round and saw nobody, forlornness of the most dire description seized my soul. By now it was pouring pitilessly, and what with the moment's pressing need of shelter and the blank hopelessness of belonging to nobody perhaps ever any more, my state of mind may be imagined. I wept bitterly, a weeping to distraction, such as happens only occasionally even in the life of a child.

At last I descried a gentleman sheltering himself on the lee side of a bathing-machine, sitting on the steps and idly knocking his stick upon the wood. Here was a ray of hope. I was terrified of speaking to strangers, but grown-up people could always help you out of a difficulty: they always seemed to know what to do. This one did not, however, as I found. I went up and stood before him in my heart-broken weeping, and asked him if he had seen which way some nurses and some children had taken, and, as well as I could for sobs, tried to explain to him my forlorn condition. He looked at me without a sign of compassion, and said: 'Is your soul saved? Have you found Christ?'

Never shall I forget my sense of the blank futility of that man. I turned drearily away from him with an undefined feeling that such uselessness was beneath contempt. Happily, in no short time I descried my party in the distance, and made after them as fast as my feet could run in the sand; and, as usual, met with no sympathetic word upon my trouble. That I was used to, but that man! I was about six, and by this time had learnt enough about religion to know that if you were religious enough to talk about it you were supposed to act according to its precepts, and that one of these was that, if you were out of doors, and you saw persons in distress, you had to help them, and not pass by on the other side; and with real help, too, not just asking them embarrassing things about their soul, which, when you were lost and in pouring rain, you could not think about; and even if you weren't lost, you wouldn't talk about your soul just to a man sitting on a bathing-machine. It was as much as you could do to talk to Priscilla and Henry about it.

And so this man remained in my mind as a kind of personification of blank futility. Not that I was capable of wording it in these actual words, but that was my feeling. I often saw that gentleman afterwards in our walks, when going along arm-in-arm with Henry. I used to look at him in silent, shrinking wonder as we passed; but I felt that the thing lay too deep for words, so never told even Henry what manner of man it was that we were passing. I kept the experience to myself. I think I may say that never since I grew up have I passed a crying child in the street that was alone without trying to assuage its grief, and, if need were, restoring it to its friends. But so does everybody else, I believe. Just that one man! But, after all, he was acting up to his lights, I suppose, and thought he was looking after my truest interests, whilst just the fact that one's earthly little self was lost was nothing.

Henry and I discussed the probable fortunes of our souls a good deal together, but that was quite another matter. Although in much anxiety as to the likelihood of going to heaven, there was a hopeful uncertainty about it; but not so in regard to a

boy whom we did not know, but whom we knew well by sight as being dressed in Scotch kilts, on which account we always called him ‘Scotch Boy.’ Well, one day Scotch Boy came up insolently to us, and told us we were a couple of little fools. Now, there was one thing about which we felt entirely certain from the Bible, as we thought, and that was that anyone who ever called another person ‘fool’ would go to hell without any possible hope of reprieve. Consequently, Scotch Boy stood out in our minds as possessed of an awful distinction—the distinction of being the one person amongst all whom we ever knew or saw about whose fate there was absolutely no shadow of a doubt. We looked at him with awe. All other people we knew of just possibly *might* escape; but for this boy there could be *no* hope. I used to seem to see him—him and his kilts—standing in the flames. But what astonished me was the careless indifference of this hopelessly condemned boy, who *must* know that ever since he called us fools he was a lost creature. And yet he used to bowl his hoop so happily about the streets

We were a prey to many agitations, Henry and I. We had an extreme horror of deformity and disease. It was intensely repulsive to us, and filled us with a kind of terror. We ran away from any cripple in the streets as if he were a leper. There was a poor old man who swung his paralyzed legs along by means of crutches whom we called ‘Man-two-sticks.’ If he loomed in sight we fled in terror to the side of the nurses, whom otherwise we so scorned to be near, as we did also if we met a certain lunatic, whom we called ‘Man-not-in-his-right-mind,’ emphasis laid on the ‘not.’ We do not seem to meet such odd people in the streets nowadays. This man used to turn violently round after every few steps, as if he were chased by some fiend. Then there was a wretched beggar who was hideously shaggy on every day but Sunday, and he was called ‘Man-not-shaved-on-Saturday-shaved-on-Sunday.’

‘Man-no-legs,’ ‘Man-withered-leg,’ and a host of others there were, the sight of whom was terrible to us. I hated abnormal physical conditions so much that I always cried whenever we passed the hospital, to think of all the amputations and operations that went on in there. But then such odd things wrung my feelings in one way or another. I remember bursting out crying the first time I saw the shipping on the river, when, I suppose, about five or six. The thought of the size of the world represented by those Western-bound ships was absolutely appalling to me.

And then, if Henry or I saw a negro, it frightened us out of our wits. There was a little black pageboy, a relic of the past West Indian habits of the city near which we lived, who used to accompany some children to play in the fields where we played. Those fields were a delightful place, abounding in steep banks, where we could roll over and over; full of fine elm-trees, under the shadow of which we held weddings and funerals; with ponds, where brilliant dragon-flies spread themselves before us; and hedges full of wild roses. Here, in the midst of our games, would appear suddenly the black page, throwing a shadow over all our fun—until at last he added to the fun, for, when he learnt that we were frightened of him, he used to make sudden darts at us, and pursue us, and we took to flight. This became a game—a tremulously exciting one—and we became bold enough to dare him, or to creep stealthily near to him, until he turned upon us, and we fled again, half in fun, half in terror. Those delicious fields and groves are now no more, and endless villas take their place.

CHAPTER VII

THERE were other and more tangible puzzles to occupy my attention than the philosophy of life, and so on. One was the continual problem of what could be inside us. Many a morning after waking up, too early for rising, did I try to imagine what bones could be like, and what was inside one's head. I pictured the head as full of cobwebs, because I supposed the brains occupied only one small part of the skull, and as the rest was empty, and we could not get inside to dust it, it must be full of cobwebs; for that was what happened to an empty and undusted room. I tried also to picture the bones. I had no idea that they were arranged in a skeleton, but thought they were like mutton-bones with no flesh upon them, and that they lay about loosely in the body anyhow. But one thing especially astonished me, and that was the movement of the heart. What could it be? At last I came to the conclusion that one of the bones, unlike the others, had the power of rocking itself to and fro, like a cradle. It was extremely proud of this power, and many a morning did I lie and listen to the conversations between this highly accomplished bone and the rest. 'Look,' it used to say; 'see, I can rock—you can't.' The others were excessively cross with this one's boasts, and all tried to rock, but could not; and the rocking bone remained in its glory, the only one endowed with the power of movement all by itself.

Another favourite thing to think about in the long hours of wakefulness was to calculate how many sovereigns could be made out of 'Miss Kilmansegg's' golden leg. This was a very long affair to think about. I never got to the end of it. I began it night after night, but always fell asleep before it was done. My method of computation was in imagination to take sections of the supposed leg, each of the thickness of a sovereign, and to see how many such sections could be taken. Each section I cut out, as it were, into sovereigns. The difficulty was that no two sections were the same in size, and to allow for the diminishing calf, and the knob at the ankle, and especially for the foot and the toes, was a really Herculean task to do in your head; and a further complication to allow for was the spaces of gold left between the rounds of the sovereigns; and I had to compute how many more these little irregular, four-cornered bits would make if soldered together. There was nothing, I think, that I forgot to take into consideration, but, needless to remark, I never finally arrived at the value of the leg; for to keep each section, with all its varying bits, in my head, and then to add them together, was impossible, not to speak of the fact that sleep always prematurely closed the calculation. But it was a far better exercise of one's mathematical powers than most of the very bad teaching I had in school.

I was thought throughout childhood to be extremely stupid—the stupid one of the family. I scarcely ever paid the very slightest attention to lessons, but was always entirely absorbed with my own thoughts, or in scribbling fashionably-dressed children, with feathers and sashes and all the things I could not wear myself, upon my slate. I could not even learn to tell the time until I was disgracefully old. Ever so many people tried to teach me, but I gave no attention, and let them talk, without dreaming of knowing any more at the end than at the beginning. They tried to shame me into learning it by saying Henry and Charlie, both younger, could tell the time. I did not care at all, nor mind being thought stupid, and had at that time no ambition.

I do not remember learning the very first steps in reading, and could read, I think, by four or so, and fluently by five. I can just remember spelling out laboriously, 'I have a bun. Have you a bun? No, but Tom has a nut'—and that kind of thing. One thing I remember as interesting to me now in understanding small children, and that is one of those unaccountable and extraordinary fits of obstinacy, from which most very small children suffer at one time or another. I remember reading with our governess, and suddenly refusing to read the word 'and,' although I knew the word perfectly well. The lesson was at a deadlock, for say it I would not. The governess exhausted all her resources in her efforts to get the better of my will and not to be beaten. I was not to be beaten either, and the tussle continued for a long while. She was at her wits' end, and so was I. If she would only pass that word over and let me go on with the next, which I believe is much the best way in such cases. But she would not. At last she asked if I should like the other children to be sent to play and have no more school, leaving me still at my lessons. I answered stolidly, 'Yes,' and the others were told to go, and gleefully fled away much earlier than usual. I held out for some time in lonely sullenness. 'Now, what is that word?' the governess would ask. No answer. It kept on like this until I too longed to be let off, and so at last stolidly and moodily said 'and.' The governess had her hard-won victory, and I was allowed to join the others, feeling a little flat. From what I recollect of this, I believe these fits of obstinacy to be due to a sudden moral aberration, and they should be treated as such, and just passed over.

On the whole, reading was no difficulty. It was my sums that cost me trouble. We were shockingly taught in those days, as everybody knows, and no one ever thought of explaining to me what was meant by adding. 'Now, what are one and four, or two and three?' would be asked. I had not the remotest notion what they meant by using numbers in this vague manner without referring to one thing or four things. Consequently, I did not know in the least what process to go through to arrive at the result. And so, when given long addition sums upon my slate, I put down figures by guess-work, just as they came into my head. Of course, they were all wrong, and when a stroke was put through a figure, I put down another one to see if that would do better. I came to the right one if I guessed long enough; but it was a weary process, and cost me tears not a few. If only they had explained things in the rational way an aunt did one day, when she found me gazing weeping at a shilling. 'What is the matter?' asked my aunt. Now, I had somehow collected twelve pennies, and another aunt had thought I should like them exchanged for a silver shilling. Not so; I felt cheated, so sobbed out:

'Aunt Jane has taken away all my moneys, and given me only one.' But this aunt explained it all perfectly clearly—so clearly that when she asked if now I would rather have my moneys back instead of the shilling, I refused, and felt no longer cheated. But in school things were never treated luminously like this. However, in process of time I caught the idea of adding and subtraction. But then occurred another difficulty. I had not the slightest inkling of the decimal notation, and consequently could not imagine why, when you had borrowed ten in subtraction, you should give only one back. It was just like the odd ways of grown-up people, who, I supposed, arranged everything arbitrarily; and somehow they had settled that that stupid way of paying back only one should make the sum to be considered right, and

all that was left for me was to fall in with this apparently arbitrary rule. Still greater were the unintelligible mysteries resorted to in those horrible sums called multiplication and division. However, I learnt to handle the method, and took it on faith. Meanwhile, there was interest of another kind connected with one's sums. I generally personified everything I had to do with spontaneously, and entirely irrespective of my will or inventive power. The persons and their characters and actions just came and presented themselves as independently of me as did the real persons I encountered. And the figures in my sums did this. Each of them up to ten was a distinct personage, and I knew and understood them much better than the sums in which they played a part.

Ten was a supremely well-bred lady—in fact, a Queen. There was never any trouble or embarrassment in connection with her. She divided and multiplied with such consummate ease that she appeared to be the very personification of graciousness and good manners. *Nine* and *Eight* were also of the high aristocracy, but very inferior to *Ten* in manners and position. They were haughty and disagreeable, very difficult to do with, and concession from them was hardly to be won. *Nine*, especially, was intolerable. She made it as difficult as possible for you to know what any number multiplied by her came to, and when you added with her, you had to use the help of the gracious *Ten*, who with delightful kindness allowed you to add *her*, and then take one off. Thus, she came between you and the horrible and vulgar manners of *Nine*. *Eight* and *Nine*, too, were most disagreeable in their behaviour to *Seven*, not to say snobbish. *Seven* was of the minor aristocracy, and barely admitted into the society of *Eight* and *Nine*. These two gave themselves tremendous airs on the strength of so soon getting into the dignities of the ‘eighties’ in their multiplication, and they despised and sneered at *Seven*, telling him that there were so few ‘eighties’ in his line. *Seven* suffered much from these ill-mannered sneers, and used meekly to plead that by the time he came to twelve times he got into the ‘eighties’; but *Eight* said he didn’t think much of that—why, *he* got into them at only ten times; and as for *Nine*, she got into them at nine times! And then *Eight* flouted *Seven*, and was so proud of *Nine*’s dignity that he fell into a kind of satisfied contemplation of the greatness of *Nine*, to whom he chose to consider himself allied. *Seven* was also very hard to deal with, but I never resented it, because, poor creature! he was always so much depressed in his spirits. *Six* was a happy, gracious, person, who did not pretend to much acquaintance with *Eight* and *Nine*; and as she set up for nothing, these haughty people let her alone. She had a happy, self-contained dignity, and was pleasant to do with. You generally knew what *Six* times anything was. But *Five*! he was an intolerable prig, bumptious and conceited to the last degree. He gave himself tremendous airs on the strength of dividing *Ten* exactly. This he considered ranked him almost with *Ten* herself. He was always boasting of it, insolently reminding *Eight* and *Nine* that *they* couldn’t do that, telling them also that wherever *Ten* could go in sums, *he* could always go, and *they* couldn’t. *Eight* and *Nine*, I will say for them, maintained a dignified silence when taunted by this little upstart. *Five* was very easy to work with, and it was a kind of holiday to one’s difficulties when one had to recite his line; but for all that, I couldn’t like him, his manners were so intolerable.

Four, *Three*, and *Two* were respectable members of the artisan class, simple and dignified in their own way, and never putting much trouble in your path when you did your sums. *One* was a colourless personality, as when you multiplied by him nothing happened: things were just the same as before; and you did not even have to say his line when you stood with your hands behind your back before your governess, and laboured through the multiplication table. You only had to begin at *Twice*. *Eleven* and *Twelve* presented themselves with a less vivid personality. *Eleven* seemed to try to rival *Ten* with her easiness, but it seemed stupid to do it always by means of just using the same figure as you started with—two eights, two sevens, and so on. *Twelve* was so high as to be almost above comprehension of his character. He had one fairly nice peculiarity when you said his line, because you only had to think of the finish of all the other lines. I was well aware that this was an attempt at graciousness on the part of *Twelve*, but since you never could remember offhand what was the finish of the other lines, this condescension did not amount to much. *Twelve* always seemed rather like my eldest sister, Dorothy, a person to be profoundly respected, but not one you could presume to have much easy intercourse with. *Twelve*, *Eleven*, and *Ten* all had one singular peculiarity, which was that you never put them nicely and plainly down in your sum when they came, but for some arbitrary reason had to split them into two, and count the one in another row—perfectly senseless; but still it had to be done, or else your sum was wrong.

This drama with the numbers was very vivid, and wholly independent, as I have said, of any attempt at invention on my part. The difference of ranks so plainly marked was all the more curious because at this time I had absolutely no idea that the community was divided into different grades of rank except broadly into that of rich and poor, or, as we always called it, into gentlemen and ladies and street people. And as to analysis of character in the case of real people, I was stupidly incapable of it; yet all these numbers were as clearly defined as possible in their varied characteristics.

Another peculiarity—but this I know I share with many others—was seeing every name in colour. A proper name was pleasant or otherwise, according to its hue. *Edward* was a pleasant green, *Edith* a pleasant mauve, *Charles* bordered on crimson; and these were all names I loved. But *William* was a dismal brown, *Samuel* a quite hideous yellow, *John* a colourless sort of gray, *Elizabeth* an unpleasant green, and *Thomas* unpardonably black. Consequently, I disliked all these names. The colour primarily depended on the colour of the letters, whether taken individually or in combination. *O* always tended to black, *AR* together were red, and so on. To this day stories and novels have a prevailing colour, so that if it did not puzzle people, I should say, for instance, ‘Read that; it is a charming gray story, or a brilliant red one; and that one is a rich purple,’ and so on. Occasionally I have the treat of encountering another person who sees things like this, and have seen people gaze at us in blank astonishment when they heard us talking in these terms, wondering whether we had suddenly gone off our heads. Many see things laid out in maps before them, or squares. I have never seen things spread out like that; they are always either seen in colours or as marked and living personalities.

I do not remember that anything in grammar endowed itself with these interesting personal qualities. I wonder that the cases in the Latin grammar and the

moods, all of which gave me abundant unhappy moments and caused me to shed many tears, did not do so. But no such relieving circumstance presented itself in this direction. How the accusative case did worry and puzzle me! No one ever explained what was meant by it in any kind of intelligible fashion. All I knew was that it was somehow not the proper thing for both nouns in a sentence, as a rule, to be put down with the same ending. Why not? Such, however, was the fact for some most occult reason. But which was to be which? Of course, you generally lighted on the right thing, if you put the second noun in the accusative; but then they laid horrid traps for you, in which that rule did not hold good. It was hopeless. And then those meaningless and extraordinary declensions, easy enough to learn, except when it chanced to be *Deus* or something irregular like that; but whatever was it all about? Whoever heard of a thing called ‘of a table,’ or of a thing called ‘by or from a table’? And then, when you had so sensible a thing as just ‘a table,’ you could put it with an ‘m’ at the end or not, for no reason that you could see. And when it came to the vocative ‘O table,’ it was, to my apprehension, the very climax of absurdities. It will be readily realized that I was sufficiently stupid. Yet I craved for reasonableness, and followed an argument easily enough, if anyone put it in really clear terms, but teaching then was not the teaching of to-day.

As it was, I turned away from it all, and, rejecting the attempts at explanation to be found in our English grammars, I resolved to write a grammar for my doll, which should be innocent of attempts at explanation altogether. This would be far more sensible, I thought. So I began a grammer which should not be hampered with any reasons at all. ‘You should not say a apple, but an apple,’ it began, avoiding anything but parrot rule as wasted energy.

CHAPTER VIII

WE played much with dolls. My first one was a fright made of wood, and dressed like a grown-up person—a thing I always hated in a doll. However, I was only four, and worthy of nothing better than a cast-off doll of one of the others; and this, being the only one I had, was valued. Willy, who was a great tease, and despised dolls more than words can say, one day, in pure wantonness, took my doll and smashed it, to my infinite indignation. He did me excellent service, as it happened, for my mother bought me a new one; and of all the moments of short-lived pleasure in my life, perhaps few come up to that when this new doll was put into my arms. To begin with, it was new, and bought all on purpose for me, who rarely had anything new. And nextly, it was a baby doll, and could be really and truthfully regarded as a baby without drawing on my all-too-much-exercised imagination. And all the older children looked on and admired, and even envied. Insignificant me envied! Oh, that *was* a moment! I was so entirely intoxicated that I curtseyed and curtseyed and curtseyed with rapture. That was the only way I could think of for expressing my feelings; and it was curious, because Quakers never allowed such a worldly performance as curtseying, and I did not know how to do it, nor had even heard of such a thing until it broke out spontaneously in a moment of surpassing rapture.

Willy was a great tease. He jeered at us for ever feeling pain, and was fond of inflicting it, after the usual manner of boys, in pinches and torments of various kinds. We used to try to punish him by hurting him, and all set upon him at once. But he always assured us that he could feel nothing, and it was so impossible to make an impression upon him, either mental or physical, that we nicknamed him Wooden Billy. What a little tyrant that personage was, though he looked so innocent in his brown holland pinafore fastened in with a belt, and his blue eyes. I always chose to consider that Wooden Billy was quite a stupid boy, who cared for no intellectual things, and thought no thoughts, and was much surprised when, by-and-by, I found him reading volumes and volumes of learned books; but at that time he seemed a hopeless tease, and nothing more, excepting once when I cried because I had lost a sugar-plum, when he kindly gave me one of his own, which made a deep impression on my mind, and has remained enshrined in my memory. The history of Wooden Billy has always led me almost to think that Wordsworth was wrong, and that the child is not always father of the man; for a kinder, more sympathetic man than Wooden Billy it has not been my privilege to know, nor one who would go farther out of his way to help anyone in distress. So learned, too, did he become that the name of Wooden' Billy has long been changed to that of Solon. When he became older he was a very strict brother, and he thought me such a feckless, careless, entirely unsatisfactory little girl that he took me in hand himself. He even brushed my hair for me; he hadn't the least idea how to do it, and I used to go into fits of laughter over the operation, and was by no means averse from it. The funny thing was that he brushed the plaits without undoing them! I suppose plaits were more than he knew how to manage. He was busy enough with his own lessons at this time, but he found time to superintend mine. He was terribly strict, and as a mentor Priscilla wasn't in it in comparison. The penalty for every mistake I made was ten slaps. These mounted up to hundreds, and even thousands, and were duly

administered. It became to me a delightful game, the running away and hiding, and the trying to elude these kindly attentions and chastisements. Lessons had never been so amusing before, and I would even make mistakes on purpose, for the fun of the thing. The chastisements were given on my hands. Once, when ten thousand were owed me, I said I would contrive to chastise him at the same time, for I would fasten books on the palms of my hands, and then it would hurt him to strike the books. But he was as wooden as ever, and I had to abandon the books, for they hurt me more than they did him.

We had few playmates besides ourselves. Somehow, we did not see much of the other little people who came to meeting, and whom we used to watch with a half-contemptuous interest, because they were dressed more or less in the proper costume, and said ‘thee’ and ‘thou,’ and talked of the days of the week and the months in the Quaker manner. We despised them, for from the very beginning of our existence we struck against the Quaker language, in spite of the fact that it was always used in speaking to us, except by the servants, from whom alone did we at first ever hear the method of talking ‘out of the Society.’ We affected not to understand when people talked to us of ‘First day’ and ‘Second day,’ or of ‘Fifth, or Sixth month,’ and used carefully to calculate ‘which day or month was fifth day or eighth month, although we knew quite well, and were skilled enough in all the quaint turns and phrases of the Quaker language, when we wanted to use it for purposes of mimicry. When older, we enjoyed it and loved it. There were certain little books published every year recording the deaths of all ‘Friends’ who had died within the year, and giving short memoirs of any of exceptional character or piety. The quaintness of the language of some of these had a fascination for us, and especially for David, to whose mind they were most foreign. And now,’ he would say in the very middle of something quite different, ‘let us read an “Annual Monitor,”’ as these books in their ancient drab covers were called. And he would fetch down from the shelves one of the oldest and oddest, and then read in a solemn, sonorous voice with intense emphasis, This dear young Friend was early impressed with the uncertainty of her continuance in mutability.’

It was in no spirit of derision that he read these memoirs, but with a keen delight in the old-fashioned wording, and with a genuine appreciation of the young Friends portrayed.

David, however, was anything but a Quaker. *This* dear young Friend early developed a great liking for a very different creed. He would dress his mantelpiece like an altar, and change its decoration in exact accordance with the Church seasons—a thing absolutely alien to the Quaker mind; for in the Society of Friends days and seasons are not so much as heard of (or at least used not to be), every day being a holy and consecrated day—a point they used to carry so far that they did not even mark the Sunday beyond meeting for worship that day, and otherwise continued their business as on weekdays. This custom had long gone out in our time, to the grief of some of us; for we hated Sunday. When very small, Sunday appeared to come very rarely, and I supposed it was an arbitrary arrangement. I remember quite well the transition from the excessively slow sense of time of an almost baby mind to a very much more rapid march of time. Suddenly Sundays took to coming round most disagreeably often, and I remember fretfully asking the grown-ups why they

had taken to making Sundays so much more often than they used to. If they only would make them come much less often! And I felt greatly aggrieved because they would not attend to my earnestly expressed wish. Of course, dolls and bricks and everything had to be put away on Sunday—those dolls which Priscilla had named, mine John Caractacus, and hers Alfred Caligula; for it will be seen that she was duly learning her ‘Mangnall’s Questions,’ mixing up English Kings and British patriots and Roman Emperors in a delightful confusion.

On week-days our dolls were an important part of our lives, as they always had measles or whooping-cough, and kept us on tenter-hooks by constantly nearly dying. A healthy doll we should have thought most stupid. There would have been no excitement, and nobody to be agitated about. Once our dolls really did die, as it were, before our eyes. Priscilla and I had been promoted to real wax dolls, and one very hot summer’s day we were sitting in the garden nursing them, no doubt, through some fell disease, when we looked upon them, and, behold! their faces were no more. They had melted in the sun. No more wax dolls for us. Someone gave me another very beautiful one, but it was locked up carefully out of harm’s way, and is still in being.

Occasionally, but very rarely, we had a playmate to join in our doll games. But when she came, we were so much absorbed in the contemplation of her that we had little attention to give to our games. She was a little cousin whose parents had ‘turned Church,’ and so she enjoyed the superlative distinction of being ‘out of the Society.’ Great was our admiration of her. She was, in our eyes, little short of a Princess. She was younger than most of us, but we all joined in the homage. We would stand round her in a circle lost in delight at the sight of her general appearance, so different from ours—her little silk frocks, her lovely ringlets, her scarlet ‘Colleen bawn’ —as a certain cloak in fashion was called—her feathered hats! She was a glowing object, and we never tired of singing her praises. She took our homage and admiration as her right, and, quite realizing the difference between herself and her old-fashioned little Quaker relations, gave herself many pretty little airs, and talked very grandly to us. But it was heaven to have her with us for a little. If we could not be ‘like other people,’ the next best thing was to own a little cousin who was like them.

But the thing we most admired in our little cousin’s wardrobe was her nightgowns. ‘Have you seen Gwendolen’s nightgowns?’ was eagerly asked by those first privileged to see them. ‘They come down below her feet, and are all done with little frills.’ ‘Oh!’ we exclaimed in breathless wonder. For if there was one thing in which we were more severely garmented than in others, it was in the matter of our nightgowns, which were very short, had as little stuff in them as possible, were absolutely devoid of a frill, and, worse than all, were fastened behind, which was just like being a baby. Gwendolen’s, of course, fastened in front, and she had escaped from babyhood. We were not in the least jealous about it. It seemed in the nature of things that pretty Gwendolen should have her part in a charming world quite out of our reach, and the most we asked was that we should bask a little in her reflected sunshine. We never thought about our looks from the point of view of what we were like by nature, but only from the point of view of being dressed oddly; and so, while we were lost in admiration of Gwendolen’s beauty, we did not think about our own

faces. I never thought about my face or figure excepting once when very small indeed, and I saw myself in a glass while a frock was being fastened. Then, seeing a very rosy face in the glass, with brown, short curls, I exclaimed in all innocence, ‘How pretty I am!’ Priscilla ‘dealt with’ me scornfully in a way never to be forgotten, and was scathing in her talk about the unheard-of vanity of such a remark. ‘Why, nobody *ever* says she is pretty for herself. It’s only other people who tell you, and they don’t tell you *ever*, because then you’d be vain and a dreadful person.’ I do not remember ever thinking of my personal looks again, or of its even entering my head to think whether I was pretty or not, until at about thirteen I looked in the glass, and thought myself so hopelessly ugly that I wondered anyone ever spoke to me. But even then I forgot all about it—there were far too many things to think about—and became indifferent, since people *did* speak to me; and so were most of us, I think. For certainly Quakerism did not err in encouraging personal vanity, but did sometimes induce self-consciousness to a great degree, producing painful shyness, and all the uncomfortableness that comes from feeling peculiar.

But this is a small matter, and counts for little in comparison with all that one gains in being born a Quaker. We have since learnt to be thankful for our Quaker inheritance, and would not wish it otherwise for anything, although most of us have left the fold.

CHAPTER IX

ALTHOUGH we did not talk the Quaker language, there were many words forbidden to us, especially any bordering on slang. ‘Jolly’ and ‘awful,’ and particularly ‘awfully jolly,’ were all *taboo*, and, of course, also schoolboy words. I got into a scrape for saying something was such a ‘fag’ I shouldn’t do it. I suppose many a little schoolgirl now uses ‘beastly fag,’ and is not reproved. I, however, am inclined to lean towards the strict bringing up that we had in regard to conversation, in spite of rebellion at the time. It was damping, no doubt, to be continually pulled up when you were describing something enthusiastically. I remember this especially on one of the rare occasions when I had been for a walk on a glorious spring day, and had been half intoxicated with the mysterious charm of Nature, and had gazed up into the blue sky, and listened to the busy, bustling rooks, with a momentary sense that life was worth living. In describing with bursting enthusiasm the delight of this walk, I exclaimed, ‘And the rooks were making such a row!’ ‘Such a what?’ exclaimed my mother, much shocked; and the joy was gone, and life taken up once more in its usual sober you-mustn’t-do-that sort of aspect. There were various difficulties in the matter of speech—words that were too long to say, and yet you needed to say. Wooden Billy was measuring a distance on a map of many streets, and I thought he was skipping the corners of the streets in a rather cavalier fashion, as he ran his compasses from point to point. ‘No, that isn’t *apturate*,’ I called out. ‘Apturate!’ exclaimed the elder ones in derision. ‘It was very stupid and ambitious of little girls to try to say words that they couldn’t; they should stick to what they knew.’ There seemed no doing the right thing.

I have heard a story about some children who were much vexed with their parents in regard to some disappointment inflicted upon them. ‘I should like to say a naughty word,’ said one. ‘So should I,’ said the other; ‘let’s say a naughty word.’ ‘Yes,’ replied the first; and they withdrew into a far-off corner with this dire purpose in view. ‘Thee say it,’ said one. ‘No, thee say it,’ said the other. ‘No, thee.’ And at last one of them, summoning up courage, shut her eyes, and with a sense of pronouncing a malediction, came out solemnly with the word ‘Jolly!’

I was always puzzled as to what was thought wrong and what was not. Quakers did not go into mourning, and when I heard an aunt say that if it had not been for her mother’s disliking it, she would have gone into mourning when her father died, I was horrified, and thought she had been very near committing a great crime. Though quite confused as to what was wrong intrinsically and what was only inexpedient, I had a severe sense of justice, and was inclined to leave out mercy. On one occasion a little boy we were playing with did something naughty—I forgot what—and we were all asked by our governess whether she should tell his mother when she came presently to fetch him. Everybody said no, excepting me, and I, although it took moral courage to differ from all the rest in such a matter, gravely said yes, she ought to be told. I had a kind of vague idea that the little boy would slip into other naughty things if allowed to escape now, and his mother to think he had been good all the time, when he had not. I am not *quite* sure that I applied equally severe law to myself when I had been doing any forbidden thing.

I had always a dislike of anything that appeared entirely unreasonable, and soon arrived at the conclusion that it was silly and unreasonable to like or dislike a

person according to his or her behaviour to one's self. A person might be quite agreeable and good even if he did not happen to like one's self. That, I considered, was no test of a person's real virtues, but only of the relation that might exist, through a want of affinity, between that person and one's self. This way of regarding the matter has served me in good stead all my life, and by preventing my taking a premature dislike to a person, or forming an adverse judgment on insufficient grounds, has made many a friendship possible which would otherwise have been the reverse. As a rule, where I keenly disliked, I have found that there were really very dislikeable qualities.

As a quite small child, however, I had no likes or dislikes of a strongly-developed character. There were people one feared, and those one did not fear, and some whose personality was delightful, but who did not as yet awaken anything approaching to real affection.

Notably, there were some delightful uncles, my mother's brothers, who were most genial and full of fun, belonging to the more 'gay Quakers,' who were not particularly strict. Handsome, debonair, intensely kind-hearted and amusing, as well as interesting, their rare visits lifted us into another world. One of them had a beautiful tenor voice, and had learnt to accompany himself on the guitar, singing to us Troubadour songs. This introduced us into an atmosphere entirely unknown, full of dreams of delight, that seemed not of this world, and yet in a sense a native air to one or two of us; for, unknown to ourselves, there was a far-off Spanish strain in our blood, which came in as long ago as the reign of Elizabeth, but to which one or two of us had harked back, to the exceeding confusion of our temperaments, producing a warring element with our severe surroundings from the beginning, and with the Puritan side of our nature.

CHAPTER X

WE were some of us sent at a very early age to a Quaker boarding-school, but for awhile, as a matter of convenience, I was sent to a day-school near by, where, to my embarrassment, I was the only Quakeress. Being at this time excessively lively and full of fun, I soon got on with the little Church girls very happily, but, alas! was secretly much ashamed of being so peculiar, and very anxious that my schoolfellows should not discover my exceedingly different home conditions. Especially do I remember one day meeting in the road my grandmother in her very rigid Quaker costume, and wishing much that she would not notice me, and so cause me openly to exhibit our sectarian peculiarity in the public way, lest any schoolfellows should see, and afterwards jeer. My response to my grandmother's kindly inquiries was cold and hurried, whilst I searched anxiously round with my eyes to see what observers there might chance to be. Yet at the same time I was conscious of feeling ashamed of being ashamed of my Quakerism. And very soon after this I developed, along with Henry, an enthusiasm for the Society of Friends, and gloried in it, instead of being ashamed. Friends were fast diminishing in numbers at this time, but Henry and I used constantly to declare that there would be, at any rate, two Quakers left as long as we were alive. This has not proved true. Henry might possibly have justified the truth of it for himself, but he died in early manhood.

When first sent to a boarding-school, I pursued the even tenor of my way as regards lessons, rarely paying the slightest attention to them or my teachers, and sitting contentedly at the bottom of the class lost in my usual abstraction. Two lessons I used sometimes to attend to because they seemed amusing. Geography was one, and another mental arithmetic, which latter I did well, provided I was allowed to do it in my own way, even though a roundabout one, without the short-cuts which others seemed to find convenient, especially the grown-ups, but which I could not understand. If ever awakened into interest during a history lesson, since become a favourite subject with me, it was to make a mental criticism upon something that struck me as mistaken or unreasonable. I remember well musing at nine years old on the question of 'ship-money.' It puzzled me greatly that Hampden should have made his stand in opposition to the demand that inland counties, 'which had never seen a ship,' as the sentence ran in our lesson-book, should contribute towards the fitting out of the navy. 'How could it matter,' I argued with myself, 'whether they had ever seen a ship or not? The inland counties owed just as much to the navy for our success in war as the counties on the coast did, and of course the whole kingdom had to help in any war, if there must be any such thing at all.' I put it aside as one more of the inscrutable problems presented by life, for of course what John Hampden thought right must be right, or wrong must be wrong; and all the books said he was right about this, and all the grown-ups said so, and a tremendous affair in history had turned upon this point; and it was obviously absurd for a little girl to hold a different opinion, and so it must somehow be all right, only so inscrutable.

Another insoluble problem was, since no daughter ever inherited if there was a son, why did Mary Stuart become Queen of Scotland when she had a brother who was regent? To this problem there was no getting any satisfactory answer, and it, too, was put aside among the inscrutabilities. Things were altogether so puzzling that it

was better, on the whole, not to attend at all, and for the most part I sat lost to all consciousness of what was going on.

I should like to be able to claim that my thoughts during these long periods of apparent vacancy were worth anything, but, as a rule, I do not think I was thinking of anything in particular. A student of child psychology tells me that these fits of abstraction and non-attention are a means by which some children shelter themselves from the ill-effects of bad teaching, having a power of self-protection which they use unconsciously and without planning to do so. All this time they are digesting in the unconscious region such ideas as they have been able to take in, or such as seem to present themselves spontaneously. They are thus saved from the chaotic mental state consequent upon the ill-assimilation of facts and ideas which are badly presented or in too great a crowd. This may be true, and probably is so, but I cannot honestly plead that the teaching in this excellent school was bad. Some of it was, I have reason to believe, much above the average, as is usual in Quaker schools. It would seem to have been pure non-attention on my part. It is, however, possible that to some orders of mind non-attention, even to good teaching, is necessary in childhood, and that such children unconsciously supply the mental leisure necessary to their best development, whilst during these periods of what seem like moods of idle emptiness, they are not only assimilating certain first principles, but accumulating a mental power which will by-and-by give a strong grip upon things when at last they do attend to what is put before them. However this may be, certainly after awhile I awakened suddenly to a great interest in things, and, from having seemed exceptionally stupid, now learnt with almost too much ease and speed. The result of this was that I still gave little attention to school work, because it needed so little time to master my lessons. And this resulted in often meeting with the fate of the hare, and being overtaken by the tortoise while I slumbered, or, rather, by this time, while I played. For by now I had escaped from these long fits of Quaker abstraction, and become heart and soul devoted to amusement, such as could be obtained under severe conditions. It was little that could be had of the usual sort, but we made up for the lack of ordinary means of amusement by a great deal of fun and repartee, all of a very innocent character.

And here came in one more of the many puzzles of one's youthful life. For, whilst we never did anything really naughty (on looking back, I can see that amongst my schoolfellows, as far as I knew them—and certainly in my own mind—there was not a thought or a word that might not have been proclaimed upon the housetop—our minds were as innocent as blank sheets), yet we seemed to be always getting into scrapes about nothing, as it seemed to us. I was at school considered the ringleader in all that was naughty and tiresome. Tiresome, no doubt, we were, like most lively children, but really naughty we were not. And I could not make out why we were so continually in hot water. 'There seemed to be no distinction made between what was really bad and what was merely inconvenient. Of course, the mere noise of fun and laughter, of running and jumping, is inconvenient enough where there are many children together, and has to be kept within limits; but the serious reproofs and scoldings I, especially, used to come in for merely on the ground of the ebullition of youthful spirits was confusing to one's sense of right and wrong. I could not have been more gravely 'dealt with,' to use a Quaker expression, had I been

caught in all sorts of underhand and deceitful proceedings. The confusion did not seem to exist only in my own mind, but also in those of the heads of the school—dear, nice, and really delightful people that some of them were. Had they had in their own minds a clear understanding of the difference between what is merely tiresome and inexpedient and what is really to be dreaded and apprehended in a school, they would not have found some of us such a perplexity.

I was in particular a perplexity to them, because on Sundays I pored over old Quaker diaries, the mysticism of which I loved, and which used to wrap me away into a region where it seemed as if the sorrows and pettinesses of this transient world ceased to exist. Of course, this habit of mine, shared by none of my schoolfellows, marked me out as apparently very much on the right road, and met with much approval. But these mystical readings once put by, I immediately joined the throng of rollicking fun and play. I remember on one occasion being caught in our dormitory leading some innocent piece of fun, such as ‘scaling the ramparts,’ which consisted in leaping from one piece of furniture to another so as never to touch the ground, and finding out who could do the most difficult leaps—a performance in which, after our infant exploits on the roof of the greenhouse, I was an expert—when suddenly the door opened, and the headmistress, in her quaint little Quaker cap, appeared. We all stood petrified in whatever airy position we happened to be, and mine, of course, was the airiest, somewhere near the ceiling; and equally, of course, I was the one on whom the wrath of our dear little headmistress fell. ‘My example,’ she said, ‘was most deplorable; I seemed to have no sense of responsibility, and led everybody into every sort of naughtiness,’ etc. ‘Thee are such a puzzle,’ said she, looking at me in complete bewilderment; ‘there thee are’—*thee* in the South of England was always used as a nominative—‘there thee are on First days always reading such good books and seeming so much inclined to the right path, and on other days thee do nothing but lead everyone into mischief, and seem to have no conscience at all.’

I remember looking at the dear lady during this speech feeling quite as much bewildered as she did, for I could not feel that there was any inconsistency between my doings on First days and on other days, since my conscience felt perfectly innocent as to anything really naughty, and I knew, too, that amongst my schoolfellows I was regarded as a person who would not join in anything seriously wrong. And so I gazed at her silently with astonishment, but, I fear, also with that slightly derisive smile which is so annoying in young people, and which is the result of the want of mutual understanding. A cheerful representation that we were making more noise than convenient, instead of assuming naughtiness, would probably have appealed to one’s reason and goodwill, instead of leaving blank bewilderment as to what is intrinsically wrong or right, giving the confused impression that the naughty things are the nice ones.

However, far be it from me to criticise any more the school where I was, on the whole, really so happy, and where certainly the happiest time of my childhood was spent. One of the mistresses was a person of undoubted genius, very original and very delightful. Wherever she appeared, prose was turned into poetry, and the atmosphere became charged with a beautiful influence. She invented delightful stories for us, as we sat at our sewing or our drawing—stories often beyond my youthful intelligence, being for the elder girls, but with a touch of the mystical which

somewhat held my soul enthralled. One story, simple enough even for me, was never finished. The news had arrived in a town that somewhere amongst its inhabitants was hidden a little princess, and there was to be a search for her. What a wondrous description we had of all the little girls in that favoured town, of rich and poor, naughty and good, their character and circumstances drawn out in endless variety. ‘Who was the little Princess?’ Every little feminine bosom in the story became full of hope and expectation, and we were kept on tenterhooks as to who of all these little people was the fortunate one, the Princess in disguise. Surely it must be this one, so rich, so pretty, so charming; but no, it must be that one, so poor and humble and contented; or yet another, so clever and sparkling ; or no, of course the one being described now, who never even thought it could be possible it could be she. Amidst their varying claims, it was impossible to decide, and to this day I sometimes find myself wondering who was the real Princess.

We were taken long rambles in the woods near by, and I feel sure no schoolgirls were ever taken such delightful walks: such primrosings! such gatherings of bluebells and early purple orchis! such blackberryings on frosty autumn mornings! Or we would be allowed an expedition to bowl our hoops all along the quiet roads, and in summer were taken out for bathing-parties.

There were moments of terrible alloy in all this. There was a Saturday afternoon which I spent dejectedly alone trying to learn the five moods of verbs, and to attach some meaning to those long words ‘infinitive,’ ‘potential,’ and all the rest. They conveyed nothing at all, and somehow this time I was not allowed to shirk the lesson by thinking my own thoughts. So I spent a half-holiday with my cheeks besmeared with tears, and thinking the world a place not to be endured. By-and-by the kind mistress already spoken of came in, and found me in my forlorn condition. The world was soon transfigured under her influence. Words began to have a meaning, and moods at least a little sense, even the potential one. Had I ever heard of the impotent man in the Bible? Well, and what did it mean? I still thought grammar weary and dreary, but at least the introduction of a familiar Bible story by way of illustration made it seem a little less foreign to one’s mind; and, brightening up a little, I was soon sent out to play. This same teacher took me safely, too, through the mysteries of the similarities and differences between the future tense and conditional mood of French verbs, so that never more were these a difficulty, or anything else taught by this sweet woman; but, alas ! her efforts were mostly reserved for the big girls, and so I remained inattentive and ignorant.

We managed, many of us, to get some fun out of most things, but out of meeting, no. We did once try talking on our fingers, but somehow it did not succeed; even a surreptitious smile could not escape detection at school. Of course, we thought it would be very interesting if we only could manage to preach. We all promised we would support each other, if anyone could get up the courage to begin, say, with just a text, and then each would continue with another text. We were a little anxious lest someone should prove really courageous enough to begin. It was thought that I was the most likely to rise to such an effort; but I knew that they were all safe in the matter of their promise, if it depended upon me to begin. And so we never did so shock the proprieties. A boy, however, in the school which sat on the opposite side of the meeting did summon up courage to preach, dared by his

schoolfellows to do so. Great was our amazement. Happily, we were under no promise to the boys that we would follow up any effort of the kind. But this boy, with his shock of curly hair, holding forth in a quiet, dignified little voice, was cousin to some of us; so we listened in appalled silence, and covered with sympathetic blushes.

Although we could get little amusement out of meeting, we contrived to get some out of others of our religious exercises, irreverent little people that we were. We used, before we rose from breakfast, to have one by one to repeat a text of our own selection. Of course, we chose texts appropriate to the occasion. If we thought we were being worked too hard, we would gravely give out the chapter and verse, and repeat, ‘Much learning hath made thee mad.’ Various cautions we considered good for our teachers, or any particular girl, were selected from the exhortations in the Epistles. And in order that this repetition of texts might be made as secular and irreligious as possible, we would some of us select such passages as ‘O king, live for ever!’ and when reprimanded for not choosing better texts, we would innocently say, ‘But it’s in the Bible, you know.’ We were very seriously taken to task, and very deservedly, when on one occasion, being annoyed at some food we were provided with, we quoted a text about being given a stone when bread was asked for.

Quaker children certainly did not lack the power of making fun. We had been a good deal blamed at school at one time for dressing too fashionably and too entirely modernly. And so we formed a plot—I was the chief conspirator, I remember—to appear one day at breakfast dressed in the manner of thirty years before. All the girls joined in excepting the prettiest and the plainest, who neither of them, I suppose, thought they could afford to look such guys. The rest of us entered into it heartily, and great fun were the preparations. And then one morning we all appeared in procession at the breakfast-table, looking perfectly grave and perfectly innocent, with our hair done in the ugly, un-Quaker fashion of the early fifties, and our clothes to match. Gloomy and stern was the face of the mistress who presided at the table, and the meal was gone through without a word, whilst we wondered on whose devoted head the punishment would fall when we were brought before the proper authorities. It was soon, of course, suspected who was the leader, and I and another girl were taken, dressed just as we were, before the authorities. They gazed at us for a minute, and tried to keep their countenance, but our appearance was too much for them, and finally we all went together into a peal of laughter, and the affair ended, with compliments on our ingenuity in contriving such fashions out of nothing.

I suppose I *was* rather incorrigible, for it was of no use to appeal to my feelings in some things. I was one day sitting in the place at table where it devolved upon you to ask for more bread-and-butter when it was wanted. A certain diffident young Friend sent word up the length of the table that she would like more bread-and-butter. I gave no attention to the request, or somehow it was not attended to, and the message came up to me three times, on which, in impatient wrath, I asked, in a voice to be heard by the whole room, for ‘fifteen pieces of bread-and-butter for Rachel Smith’—disgustingly provoking, I am sure; and the said poor Rachel nearly sank into the ground. I was taken apart afterwards and chidden for the same. ‘Did I think it was kind to Rachel Smith to act like that?’ I said it did not strike me as particularly unkind. ‘But how would thee like it if someone asked

for fifteen pieces of bread-and-butter for thee?' 'Why, I shouldn't mind it in the very smallest degree,' I replied; 'why should I? Nobody would think I really wanted fifteen pieces; and if they did, whatever would it matter?' The teacher in question, who was young and new to the task, looked entirely bewildered and nonplussed, to my heartless amusement. I have often thought I should like to apologize to her for this and sundry other encounters in which I always got the best of it, but at that time I seem to have been as wooden as Wooden Billy.

But my experiences of this kind have stood me in good stead many a time since, when I have myself had to 'deal with' incorrigible children. I always remember exactly what it feels like, and with the slightest indication in your eye that you know and fully realize the humour of the situation, you can entirely disarm them, and come off conqueror, with good temper preserved on both sides.

We had a dear, good Quaker governess at home once, who was well acquainted with this art. She was the primmest-looking, properst person to be seen, even within the limits of our Society, and we led her a life, or should have done, but for her incomparable sense of dry humour. We would hang her bonnet on a pole far out of reach, and play endless pranks to vex her, but she always wisely entered into the fun, and saved the situation. We jeered and poked fun at her, and exercised endless ingenuity in the effort to be as disagreeable as we could, but all to no purpose; she maintained imperturbable good-humour, and not only remained devoted to us, but won our sincere affection, although to the last she was the butt on which we expended the surplus of our otherwise pent-up spirits. But for all that, she had us well in hand in reality, thanks to her sense of humour.

It was Alice and I who were so tiresome. Priscilla always took the part of our governess, to our great annoyance, so that in time poor Priscilla became a butt for our worst teasing. We must have been horrid, for on one occasion poor Priscilla was so hard beset that she threw a basinful of water over us. How we have often laughed over it since with her, for, happily, children rarely make lasting enemies of each other by this sort of thing.

I do not think we can have been very normal Quaker children, for I do not suppose that most throw basins of water at each other, or kick a bucket of water down the stairs in a fit of anger, as Wooden Billy once did. At any rate, the other little children that we looked at in meeting did not look as if they did such things, but, then, we too looked propriety personified when sitting in meeting. We made little acquaintance with each other, social visiting not being a pursuit much followed in our little community; so I really cannot tell whether we were peculiarly naughty little Quakers or not. Let us hope that we were not typical. We used to like studying the other children, and they us. But, in spite of much study, we remained inscrutable to each other, nor could we find out whether we shared in the sense of fun. There was a family of children who used to come to our meeting on Fourth days, but not on Sundays, for then they were taken to a delightful little old country meeting-house. This family filled us with much interesting speculation. They came to meeting in a huge family coach, some of them bundled into an old-fashioned 'rumble' behind—a thing scarcely seen nowadays. If only we could sit in a rumble, it would perhaps compensate us for coming to meeting. They, it seems, did not find this desirable method of progress a compensation, but took so great a return interest in us that the

excitement that made up to them for the tedium of coming was to see which of us would be there. Perhaps it is well that we did not see much of each other, for this other family, at least, whatever other little Quakers were, was as full of fun as ourselves, as we afterwards discovered; and had we put our heads together, the world—at least, our Quaker world—would hardly have contained us.

CHAPTER XI

MANY old-world memories come into my mind as I think over our early surroundings. There was an aged, aged cousin, Mary P—. She was over ninety, and bedridden, and lived in the same ‘quaint old house in the country where she was brought up as a child. So old was she that her father was born in 1725, and as you shook hands with the old lady you felt as if you were stretching your hand across the ages. She used to tell stories of her far-off youth, and, amongst others, of the cavalier way in which she and her sisters used to treat their suitors, whom, as a rule, they seem not to have favoured. She told us how, on one occasion, they amused themselves with wheeling them in a wheelbarrow and contriving to throw them into the gooseberry-bushes. Young Quakers of that ancient day seem to have been lively enough, some of them. But in connection with one of the lovers of this old lady there was a rather romantic story. This suitor found favour in the eyes of his mistress, and was not tipped into the gooseberry-bushes. But he had imbibed the opinions of Voltaire—for this old lady’s love affairs were almost contemporary with the pre-Revolution period, when young Englishmen often prided themselves on holding the most advanced French opinions—consequently, the young Quaker damsel’s relations smiled not on this gentleman’s suit, and the marriage was absolutely forbidden. They lived side by side, as it were, for seventy long years, but never exchanged a word or look. When my aged relative was left alone, the last of all her family, over ninety, and so bent double with age that she could not lie down in, her bed, but was propped with pillows; when so wrinkled that every vestige of beauty was gone, her faithful lover asked if he might be allowed to come daily to read to her. And during the remaining years of his life he came without fail every day, and solaced her loneliness and suffering. He died before her, leaving directions in his will that he should be so buried that when his long-loved mistress should be laid in the ground he should be lying at her feet. This pathetic story in connection with, one who seemed to us so antiquated, so haggard with age, made a deep impression upon our minds. What must not have been the charms of the old woman when she was young!



Aged 99

Then there was an old Friend, aged ninety-nine, who poured out to us all sorts of interesting stories of her youth. She thrilled us by telling us how, as a little child, she remembered her father’s exclaiming in solemn horror, ‘They have taken his head off!’ which was the head of Louis XVI. She used to travel much abroad with her father, meeting with all sorts of adventures, and was acquainted with one of the Pretenders who claimed to be Louis XVII., in whose identity she firmly believed, telling us that he was altogether a Bourbon in appearance. This old lady had been a ‘gay Quaker,’ as the less strict ones used to be called; and whilst she had never been

able to break through the orthodox dress, as to the coalscuttle bonnet and shape of the garments, she made up for it by astounding the Quaker world with the brilliance of the colour of her clothes, and we gazed with wonder at her crimson velvet pelisse and bright green veil out of doors, and a scarlet silk shawl worn over a white silk brocade indoors, which blended curiously with the Quaker's cap. Scarlet, of course, was, so to speak, a taboo. A gay young man, who so far departed from Friends' customs as to hunt, added to his delinquency the further misdemeanour of hunting in a brilliant coat of the taboo colour; when chidden for its unseemliness, he said he could not see the harm of it: '*it was only a fiery drab!*'

In very old-fashioned days it was even considered too gay to allow flowers on a dining-room table, and an ancient relative of ours felt it his duty, 'in much pain of spirit,' as he said, 'to bear his testimony' against such unseemly brilliance at a wedding breakfast.

Among other characters of our recollection was our great-aunt, known as Aunt Nancy, irrespective of whether she was really an aunt or not. She was a very dapper little lady, always dressed in satin, often amber-coloured; for she, too, strayed into colour as far as her dignity as an orthodox Friend allowed. She always had a long white net scarf flying behind her, which took the place of the more grave and proper three-cornered little shawl with those inclined to a lighter treatment in the matter of dress. Aunt Nancy always flew along the ground as if she scarcely touched it, her scarf looking like wings behind her. She made much of us, and her visits were a treat; we were not afraid of her. She would run after us, and catch us in the folds of her wings, and then fold us up against the beautiful net handkerchief crossed over her bosom. I remember the sweet, subtle aroma that hung about her garments—a breath from a past world, it seemed. She had much practical wisdom, and was full of traditions of the stillroom, having a herbal cure for everything, and patching up our many bruises and cuts in a way we were quite unaccustomed to. We liked being fussed over for once, for, as a rule, everything was left to cure itself in Spartan fashion, very unlike the attention given to children now. I was the only one that objected to seeing bleeding patches as big as a shilling, all full of gravel, which the nursemaids took no trouble to wash or bind up. I once in my mother's absence cut my tongue nearly in two in making a jump twice my height. For days I could not speak, it was so swollen and the cuts were so deep. I was miserable with fever and pain, but nothing was done for it. We lived in the days when no one dreamt of blood-poisoning and that sort of thing. I myself took it and my speechlessness with stolid philosophy after the first few hours of agony, though regarded as so fussy about such trifles by the others that David made a ribald rhyme about me to the effect that it was evident that I 'did not come from Sparta.' Still, we all of us took kindly to Aunt Nancy's surgical attentions. She had a wondrous ointment, which produced miraculous cures. She was full of tales of having stepped in with her ointment on various occasions just in time to save an amputation. We always said that if only she would advertise the virtues of her receipt under the name of 'Aunt Nancy's Ointment,' the family would have made an enormous fortune. The secret of it is lost with Aunt Nancy, I fear.

Other Quaker receipts have been lost too, but these have to do with the culinary art. They had creams of a superlative flavour. I have never tasted any since

our youth like them. They had a unique flavour, very subtle, very delicate; it was a pearly flavour. I do not know how it was produced, but any creams I have ever tasted since have seemed commonplace and dull in comparison. There was also a way of curing hams, and we all cured our own on this receipt, which made of ham an entirely different article from any which one tastes now, unless in some very old-fashioned homestead. I dare say these old-fashioned receipts were once common enough, but lingered on, like other forgotten customs, in our slowly-changing habits.

Aunt Nancy survived, like her ointment, until she found herself out of touch with a modern world. Her little house, with its dusky old furniture and shadowy stillness, was the last where I noticed the peculiar and subtle scent I have spoken of, a scent which seemed to transport you back into ages far gone by, and which in the solemn stillness threw you into a sort of mystic dream. The dear old lady was very lonely at last, and we, her great-nieces, formed ourselves into a little band which, paraphrasing the language of the many philanthropic societies that Friends were associated with, we laughingly called ‘The Society for the Prevention of Dulness to Aunt Nancy.’ It was the duty of one of us always to go to tea with her. If we did it as a duty, it was a very pleasant duty; the welcome was so hearty, the surroundings so quaint, the little tea arrangements so dainty, and so wholly unlike anything one experienced elsewhere.

Then there was our aged Uncle Richard, endowed with great wealth, who thought it wrong to spend money upon himself, or indulge in any luxuries, except the one considered by all Friends legitimate—a beautiful garden, where you could wander through silent alleys and dream the time away. Very particular was Uncle Richard, and he mostly disapproved of us and our new-fangled and modern ways. He had it firmly in his head that we read nothing but novels, and many a time has he peeped over my shoulder with reproving air to see what I was reading, and many a time was he lost in surprise to find it a ‘very proper book.’ He was always urging upon us to read ‘books of information,’ and recommending queer old cyclopædias and books of long-exploded lore. He would tell me of events in the year 1799, and add, ‘But that will be rather before thy time, before thou wilt recollect.’ I used to think it was a little early for my recollection, but enjoyed being thus included as part of such a far-gone generation. He was a very prosy old gentleman, devoid of imagination, and very close-fisted, as people say, and yet he suddenly surprised eighty or ninety of his young relatives by presenting them each individually with a Christmas present of an annuity for life; and thus having consistently carried out his theory that everyone should have enough, but nobody great wealth, he gave or bequeathed untold sums to missions and charities, so carefully not allowing his left hand to know what his right hand did that, being one of the largest contributors to charities this last generation has produced, his name is scarcely known, and the fame of his great bequests is lost in oblivion. Many Friends were splendid in this respect. We knew one old Friend who was so delighted when asked to contribute to some new object that he would exclaim with overflowing gratitude, ‘Thank thee, thank thee, thank thee so much for letting me know of this need for money,’ and in his gratitude would nearly shake off the hand of the person who asked him for a donation or subscription. It was this same benevolent Friend who, as I have heard, finding once a burglar in his house, took him to the kitchen, sat him down at a table

and gave him a good supper, after which the man quietly departed guiltless of burglary.

We children did not appreciate these grave and serious Friends, but as one looks back upon them, one's heart warms at the very thought of them, and one feels as if the world would never know their like again.

They were quaint, certainly, and many of them gravely taciturn, having, perhaps almost too well learnt that 'silence is golden.' There is a story of an ancestor of ours who used to take his wife to a distant meeting behind him on a pillion. He would mount gravely, and then wait a sufficient time for her to mount behind him, but without looking round or speaking. Then he would start off, and on arrival at the meeting-house wait long enough at the door for her to dismount, before taking his horse to the stable, and would never discover that his wife had not mounted at all, and that he had come without her!

There is a story, too, of my own father, that he and his brother, as young men, were driving together in a gig when the horse fell down, and one was thrown out on one side and one on the other. Each picked himself up, helped pick up the horse, got into the gig, and drove on without ever exchanging a word, even to ask if the other was hurt.

This old, quaint, silent world is nearly gone. The drab gaiters, the swallow-tail coat, the broad-brimmed hat, the coalscuttle bonnet, the 'thee' and 'thou' and the old-fashioned phrases, are rarely to be seen or heard now. The 'accidents' of Quakerism have dropped off, but, happily, much of the solid good remains. The unselfish philanthropy, without flourish or show, the ready money-giving, the intense probity, the almost scrupulous truthfulness, the strong self-control, the moderation in pleasure, the temperance in all things—these and much besides have outlived the peculiarities, and have entered so deeply into the blood that even generations 'after a family has 'left Friends' the qualities are often to be found unimpaired—qualities abounding, happily, in others than Friends, but exhibited in a kind of concentration in the Quaker. Above all, they are remarkable for an all-round balance, which sees things in their due proportions, and which makes altruistic action arise spontaneously and without effort.

It was not, however, a children's world in the old days—too sombre, too sad, too entirely without any notion of pleasure, too much restricted in its field of interest and of culture. All art, all music, the drama, the novel, and much literature, were cut off, and any development in these directions was pursued against great odds, and often absent altogether. Where there was a great development of spirituality, this was more than compensated for, but, when lacking, the character remained somewhat negative and undeveloped, but under all circumstances Quakerism presented a high average of probity and of philanthropic benevolence, and flowered into many most beautiful and saintly characters.

Children sometimes grew up with a feeling of unhappiness in their severe and monotonous surroundings, but, having arrived at years of discretion, there are few of us, I believe, who would like to forfeit our splendid Quaker inheritance. One learns, too, to appreciate it the more as the years go by. Still, I always say that you must be gifted already with a highly-developed spirituality to be a true Quaker; if not already spiritual, you will scarcely rise to its heights in its entire absence of outward means

of grace. For those, however, who can rise to it, who see things so spiritually that, instead of special Sacraments, the whole world is a Sacrament, as I have heard an Anglican put it, for those to whom every day is a holy day and every hour a holy hour, so that none need be marked off as an aid to human weakness—for such how fine a thing is Quakerism, and how much may it not yet do in the world, freed, as it now is, from peculiarities which have become obsolete, and, so far from refusing culture, pursuing it in its best and highest forms.